



Volo's Guide to CORMYR



Volo's Guide To Cormyr

Another morn brightens the rain
And so I must travel on again
To see fresh marvels ahead.
Eating wayfarers' bread,
The leavings are my only pain.

—Synder Gallowglass,
The Minstrel of Many Roads,
“Ballad of the Wayfarer”





Dedication

To Wes Nicholson—

Grand host, greater booster of gaming, and a traveler even more energetic (and considerably more competent) than Volo.

A good man—may Earth and Toril alike hold many more of them.

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CONTENTS

Foreword4
Volo's Ratings System.5

The Forest Kingdom6
Bearing Arms in Cormyr7
How Best to Behave .....	.8
Passwords .....	.8
Procuring Licenses. ....	.9
The Crystal Grot .....	.10
The Swords of State .....	.11
The Character of the Realm ....	.11

The Cities .....	.12
Suzail .....	.15
Marsember .....	.34
Arabel.....	.53

The Coast .....	.76
Bogbrook .....	.81
Dawngleam .....	.83
Gladehapp .....	.87
Kirinwood .....	.92
Monksblade. ....	.97
Wheloon. ....	.104
Wormtower. ....	.117

The Heartlands .....	.122
Aunkspear .....	.127
Blisterfoot Inn. ....	.129
Dhedluk .....	.135
Espar.....	.139
Eveningstar .....	.142
Immersea. ....	.152
Jester's Green .....	.159
Games .....	.161
Knightswood .....	.163
"The Cormyte's Boast". ....	.165
Mouth O' Gargoyles ....	.166

Stag Steads. ....	.169
Tyrluk .....	.172
Waymoot .....	.174

The East Reaches .....	.180
Hultail. ....	.189
Juniril .....	.191
The High Helm. ....	.192
Thunderstone .....	.194
Tilverton. ....	.195

The West Reaches. .....	.204
Greatgaunt. ....	.209
Hornshield. ....	.212
Wyvernhunt. ....	.215

Appendix I:	
Folk of Cormyr .....	.217

Appendix II:	
The Sword Heralds .....	.225

Appendix III:	
Magic in Cormyr .....	.230

Appendix IV:	
Index .....	.238





Foreword



Welcome to the fourth of my groundbreaking (umm, perhaps that's an unfortunate choice of word) travel guides. Many folk have long clamored for coverage of the fair realm of Cormyr in my oeuvre (I don't know what that word means, but Elminster uses it, so it must mean something grand),¹ and your wishes, ladies and gentlesirs, are my commands. I pray, therefore, to all the gods who may be disposed to smile favorably upon such efforts that your eyes also find favor with this latest of my works:² *Volo's Guide to Cormyr*.

Using This Guidebook

Entries have been included not for every hamlet or backlane crossroads in Cormyr, but for every place that's likely to be interesting—or unavoidable and useful—to the traveler. For ease of use, I have divided Cormyr into the districts familiar to most Cormyreans. From them I have plucked the cities to investigate first.

As you page through this guide, first you're presented with the cities and then the coast. These are followed by the heartlands, which are the area covered by the King's Forest—the endless deep green woods envisaged by most

folk thinking of Cormyr from afar. The section on the heartlands is followed by one covering the east reaches, where the countryside is more open, and finally by one on the almost-forgotten, mountainous west reaches. I think you'll be as pleasantly surprised as I was to find all the delightful backwaters and corners the Forest Kingdom holds.

The reader interested in things magical is urged to consult the second and third appendices forthwith. They contain much of interest to the visitor to Cormyr.

What's Here and Why

A casual glance at this peerless tome may reveal to the discerning reader a slight paucity of information on the larger cities of the Forest Kingdom. Please be aware that this is not due to any lack of proper diligence on my part but is part of a deliberate plan:³ It is my purpose in this work to eschew repeated coverage of the all-too-familiar ground of what's where in Suzail, Arabel, and Marsember, and instead show the reader something of the countryside of the Forest Kingdom, the glories of its lesser-known and smaller settlements, and places even some Cormyreans may know little of. Read

¹*Elminster*: The base flattery of the man disgusts me.

²*Elminster*: Sigh. He's been taking lessons, hasn't he?

³*Elminster*: I used to sound like this—about a thousand years ago.



on, then, and discover the *real* Cormyr⁴—Volo's Cormyr.



Volothamp Geddarm

[Ahem. "Real" Cormyr, eh? Ah-hah. Well, the reader who hopes this book provides any sort of useful place-by-place guide to the fair kingdom of Cormyr will of course (and as usual) be sadly disappointed. Those who want to get a feel of the *flavor* of back-country Cormyr will, I trust, be generally well served by this work. As gossip, 'tis pure gold, and as entertainment, 'tis worth—several tankards. (Er . . . empty ones, of course.)

Ahem, yes. There's something I should tell ye. Volo spent his youthful energies doing what he does best—spying and then

reporting everything folk would fain keep secret for good reason. When he was done, what he'd produced was a treatise on the security of Cormyr, how precisely the war wizards guard it, and how ye—or rather, a less honest and scrupulous reader—could *shatter* it and quickly bring about the downfall of the realm.









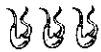



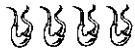



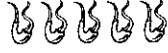



Mindful (sigh) of the beauty of Cormyr and how *some* of us are responsible enough that we'd like to preserve it, I set about expunging the most vital of his revelations. What remains is far more than enough for adventurers to get themselves into deep trouble and give Vangerdahast more than few anxious moments (heh-heh). That should only make the realm stronger—and a more entertaining place to dwell in.]



Elminster of Shadowdale

⁴*Elminster*: Delusions this grand are the final frightening stages of the descent into babbling idiocy. Hmmm, perhaps the lad would've made a good mage after all. . . .

Volo's Ratings System

	Pipes (Inns)	Tankards (Taverns)	Coins (Prices)	Daggers Alleyways, Courtyards, Etc.)	
Worst					Unsafe
↓					↓
Better					Dangerous
↓					↓
Best					Deadly





The Forest Kingdom



Welcome to a Volo's-eye view of Cormyr the fabled realm of ancient forests, galloping knights, happy folk, feasts that roar on 'til moonfall, and proud keeps where bright pennants flap in the breeze. Cormyr is a place folk from the Dales to bustling Waterdeep to the back streets of Amnian cities to the crowded Vilhon Reach uplands dream of visiting. It is a land of chivalry and romance, where the throne has been held by Obarskysrs in an unbroken line since the realm was founded and ever-watchful war wizards keep the realm and the throne secure.

Bearing Arms in Cormyr

Let those who read these words of practical advice to travelers not misinterpret my intent: I mean no ill to the throne or fair realm of Cormyr¹ but strive only to enlighten readers who might otherwise unwittingly blunder into unlawful acts or sensitive areas and thereby offend in ignorance.

The war wizards' vigilance makes a word or two of warning necessary: Anyone bearing an item clearly a weapon into Cormyr must seek out the nearest Purple Dragon guardpost and have these arms inspected and bound with peaces-

trings. For these purposes, a weapon is any knife larger than a belt blade used for dining, or anything that does harm when swung that can't be explained away as a wayfarer's staff or tradesman's tool. Purple Dragon patrols and passing war wizards are surprisingly frequent, and anyone going armed will be challenged unless their weapons are clearly tied. Being found with an unbound weapon—unless one has just defended one's life against an armed attacker and has witnesses who can attest to the fact that you didn't draw steel first—is grounds for arrest on the spot and a sentence of at least confiscation of goods and expulsion from the realm.

Only persons named in a royal charter of arms (customarily sold to adventurers' bands for sizable sums of money), bearing a license to sell weapons, able to prove that they belong to the Purple Dragons or the war wizards, or fulfilling other specific circumstances, have the right to bear arms in the realm. Some of the other valid reasons for bearing arms are: if one is of noble Cormyrean birth, if on militia duty, if pursuing weapons practice under the supervision of your local lord, if on a hunt sanctioned by your local lord, if temporarily attending a recognized hunting lodge, or if holding a Crown writ. Outlanders visiting Cormyr can only use the latter two reasons.

¹*Elminster*: Oh, no, not much. Bah! That such fools walk Faerûn!

²As little as 2,500 pieces of gold per person for a seven-day battle pass, or 3,000 gp per head for the more usual ten-day pass, and upward from there. A permanent adventuring band charter can cost 25,000 gp or more.

A band of six persons or less is considered a fellowship and is charged only 1,000 gp for a charter, plus an annual tax of 300 gp. The first year's tax must be paid upon receipt of the charter.



Crown writs are issued to confirm temporary rights to bear arms. For example, one might confirm a person's status as a noble guest of the realm (such as a visiting envoy from another land), a noble guest's bodyguard, or a special messenger or agent of the Court. Such persons must either bear the writ with them, a *Purple Dragon ring*,³ or a Court token.⁴ In all cases, records exist to verify issuance of writs, tokens, charters, and the like. Travelers who wish to unlawfully go armed in Cormyr must be very good bluffers or their careers at large won't be long. Such vigilance by the Purple Dragons and war wizards keeps the realm largely free of casual brigandage.

How Best To Behave

Cormyr's defenders are diligent and watchful. Folk who pry and openly seek information arouse suspicion, and they often earn themselves a body search and questioning by Purple Dragons supported by one or more war wizards. My coverage of several locales in Cormyr suffered in these pages because my curiosity made me unwelcome. Be warned.

Yet don't skulk fearfully about, either. Such behavior labels one as a thief and a fool. Cormyreans love their king and respect Purple Dragons, though they are wary in the presence of powerful nobles and war wizards, who're apt to be a bit overbearing and willful. Your average Cormyrean is honest, self-confident, and loyal to his or her country. For an illustra-

tion of what I mean, have a look at the lyrics to the popular ballad "The Cormyte's Boast" in the entry on Knightswood.

This is not to say one can't find folk who retie peacestrings in the secret knots used by Purple Dragons, but only wizards able to magically read thoughts can get away with doing so for long. The customary way of contacting such dark mages is to buy a drink in a tavern, letting the tavernmaster see a cord, hair, or straw tied around your finger. You'll be covertly probed to be sure you aren't a mage and questioned to force your thoughts into revealing any status as an agent of the Crown. If you're deemed safe, a fee of at least 500 gp must be paid when contact with the mage is finally made. For those not partial to their weapons, a simpler solution is to toss the offending items down a well or privy hole and, if questioned, claim they were stolen.

Passwords

When caught armed, it's often simplest to brazen it out. Just act as if you've every right to bear arms. Caution whoever's accosting you to speak quietly, and mutter, "I serve the Crown!" Say no more, waste to drop mysterious hints, until escorted into the presence of a war wizard—and you will be.

Assuming you're not facing Vangerdahast himself (in which case I fear your career is, as they say, sharply at an end), tell the august war wizard that your name and mission are known to Vangerdahast only, and utter, "My orders are to give you

³See Appendix III of this guidebook.

⁴A Court token is a numbered brass plaque engraved with the Purple Dragon symbol.

⁵See the chapter on the heartlands of Cormyr.



only this password." Then choose from among the following valid passwords:⁶

- * "Red night," to which the war wizard replies "Gray dawn," whereupon you add "And brighter morning!"
- * "Thorn's keep falls," to which the war wizard replies either "Forever" or "No more." If she (or he) says "Forever," your reply is "By the grace of the Nine!" and if she says "No more," you say "As dreamed of."
- * "Black sword," to which the war wizard replies "Meets green shield," whereupon you say, "To make red war."

Drop the phrase "seven eyes around the throne" to denote a personal, top-secret mission for the king. If a war wizard says "Bright star!" to you at any time, instantly reply, "But the well is dark!"

Procuring Licenses

Another way out of trouble if you're caught armed is to produce a license that proclaims you are a Cormyrean sword merchant. These can be had from any local lord in the usual way of course, for a fee of 4,000 gp and an annual renewal charge of 2,000 gp first due at the next Greengrass. The approval process involves very slow and very thorough investigations of one's mind, past, and present doings by any number of nosy war wizards.

A false license can also be had from the man who grows an extra eye⁷ and appears only on misty nights at the end of random

piers in Marsember, from a certain Suzailan professional escort to whom you must whisper the name "Sharanne" when you're in private, or from a serpent-headed man in the taproom of the World Serpent Inn in Arabel (The World Serpent is an establishment that can be found only by those who know how to enter it;⁸ everyone else steps into a run-down tavern called the Wild Goose when they stride through the door.) Purple Dragons have tried to slay or apprehend the snake-man on several occasions, but he commands transposition magic allowing him to switch his body with that of a beholder!

From any of these individuals—and probably others in Tilverton and Wheloon as well as several ambitious forgers in Suzail—one can get a license to sell weapons for 600 to 900 gp. Bargain shrewdly—those willing to perform a shady service or two for these vendors can get their desired document for a greatly reduced price.

A passage license can also be had for the transportation of weaponry in bulk *through* Cormyr that is not for use or for sale within the realm. This typically costs 25 gp per chest or crate; all weapons must be enclosed in locked containers. The authorities affix foil seals stamped with the Purple Dragon across all seams of such containers. If these are found to be broken when another border is crossed, the fine is 100 gp per container, plus forfeiture of whatever's in the container! Of course, replacement foil seals can be

⁶*Elminster*: Impvise thine own and pray for luck if ye *must* use this stratagem. War wizards aren't so stupid as to not peruse this guidebook, rendering Volo's suggestions useless by the time ye read this.

⁷Probably a doppelganger. It's said he works for a powerful mage. Some whisper he serves Ildool, the local lord, whose corruption surpasses the double-dealing of even Sembian merchants!

⁸By knocking in front of the Wild Goose on an imaginary door beneath the signboard and then uttering the name of any deity of Faerûn. (Elminster didn't strike out this footnote. He just sighed and said, "Ah, well, there goes the neighborhood!" Then he grinned, very slowly.)



bought from many Cormyreans who aren't part of the government. In Marsember, especially, every street seems to house one or more such morally adventurous individuals.

It should be noted that the passage of arms through the realm represents a threat to the security of Cormyr. What if a thousand Zhent caravans were to show up carrying weapons cargoes, gather in defensible locales within Cormyr, break open their arms all at once, and launch an attack on the Forest Kingdom from within? Because of the security risk that arms transport represents, Purple Dragon patrols and war wizards employing *wizard eye* spells keep more or less constant watch on the holders of passage licenses.

Smiths in Cormyr must themselves be licensed. They must also account for the usage of the metal that they procure to ensure that arms aren't made covertly within the borders of the realm and cached for use by brigands, rebels, or agents loyal to another land who enter the Forest Kingdom. Those applying for a smith license must prove residency within Cormyr; seek the sponsorship of a local lord, who will assign regular Purple Dragon patrols to check on the smith's whereabouts and doings; and pay 600 gp a year. The first year's fee must be paid up front.

Citizens of Cormyr must pay many other licenses and taxes of small amounts. The traveler can safely ignore these, except the ones that serve as admission to a trade fair or facility. Even so, Cormyreans are taxed far more lightly than the citizens of many countries and city-states, and there's a fascinating reason!

The Crystal Grot

For centuries now, the Obarskyrs have been able to tax their subjects lightly and yet elude the influence of the richest noble and merchant families by staying out of debt to them. The reason for this is a private source of fabulous wealth. Somewhere in Cormyr lies the fabled Crystal Grot, a natural cavern whose walls are lined with sapphires—a thick layer of glittering gem crystals, possibly the largest gemstone concentration in all Faerûn!

The cavern was discovered by Amble Obarskyr, cousin to Ring Pryntaler. Aside from Amble, Vangerdahast, and every rightful king since then,⁹ only six people have seen it in all the years since then. These lucky six have all been Purple Dragons skilled in mining who were brought to the cavern by magical means to keep its location secret. Their duty has been to chip out crystal masses when the Crown needed to call on its wealth.

It is known—or perhaps falsely put about by folk of the Court—that the Grot lies somewhere under land owned directly by the Crown and is part of a cavern network haunted by a watchghost or some sort of lich. In recent years the gem cavern has been reached only via a *gate*. The location of this transport's other end is secret, though persistent rumors place it somewhere in the cellars of the palace in Suzail, in a room concealed behind a sliding painting, a tapestry, or a carving-ornamented wall.

The Obarskyrs have always been careful to spend their sapphire wealth in moderation, offering stones for sale in the Vilhon Reach, Waterdeep, Amn, and

⁹That is, all of Cormyr's kings save Salamber and Gondegal.



similar distant markets to keep their value high. Yet, the existence of the Grot explains the rows of sapphires on the scabbards of all four swords of state in the regalia of the Court.

The Swords of State

Four blades are revered in Cormyr and cared for carefully at Court. Thieves should be warned that war wizards can trace their whereabouts and that stealing one draws a succession of grimly determined Cormyreans willing to do anything to get it back! These hallowed blades are *Ansrivarr*, *Symylazarr*, *Orblyn*, and *Rissar*.

Ansrivarr is the battered, ancient blade of the Obarskyr line. It symbolizes the realm of Cormyr itself. *Symylazarr*, also known as the Fount of Honor, is the sword on which all nobles swear fealty to the Crown and with which all knights are dubbed. *Orblyn*, the Edge of Justice, is used to execute nobles found guilty of capital crimes and to detect falsehood in court sessions. Persons giving evidence must do so with their hands on Orblyn's naked blade, which flashes at any untruth spoken because of its permanent *detect lie* ability. *Rissar* is the small and bejewelled blade with which all royal marriage vows are made. The couple clasps it together while they speak their vows. *Rissar*'s point also serves to spill blood in all blood vows undertaken at Court, such as the bond of loyalty to the Crown undertaken by every war wizard. It is rumored that the drops of blood sworn war wizards shed in this ceremony are carefully kept in vials by Vanger-

dahast, whom tales hold can work deadly magic on treacherous war wizards from afar by means of the precious droplets!

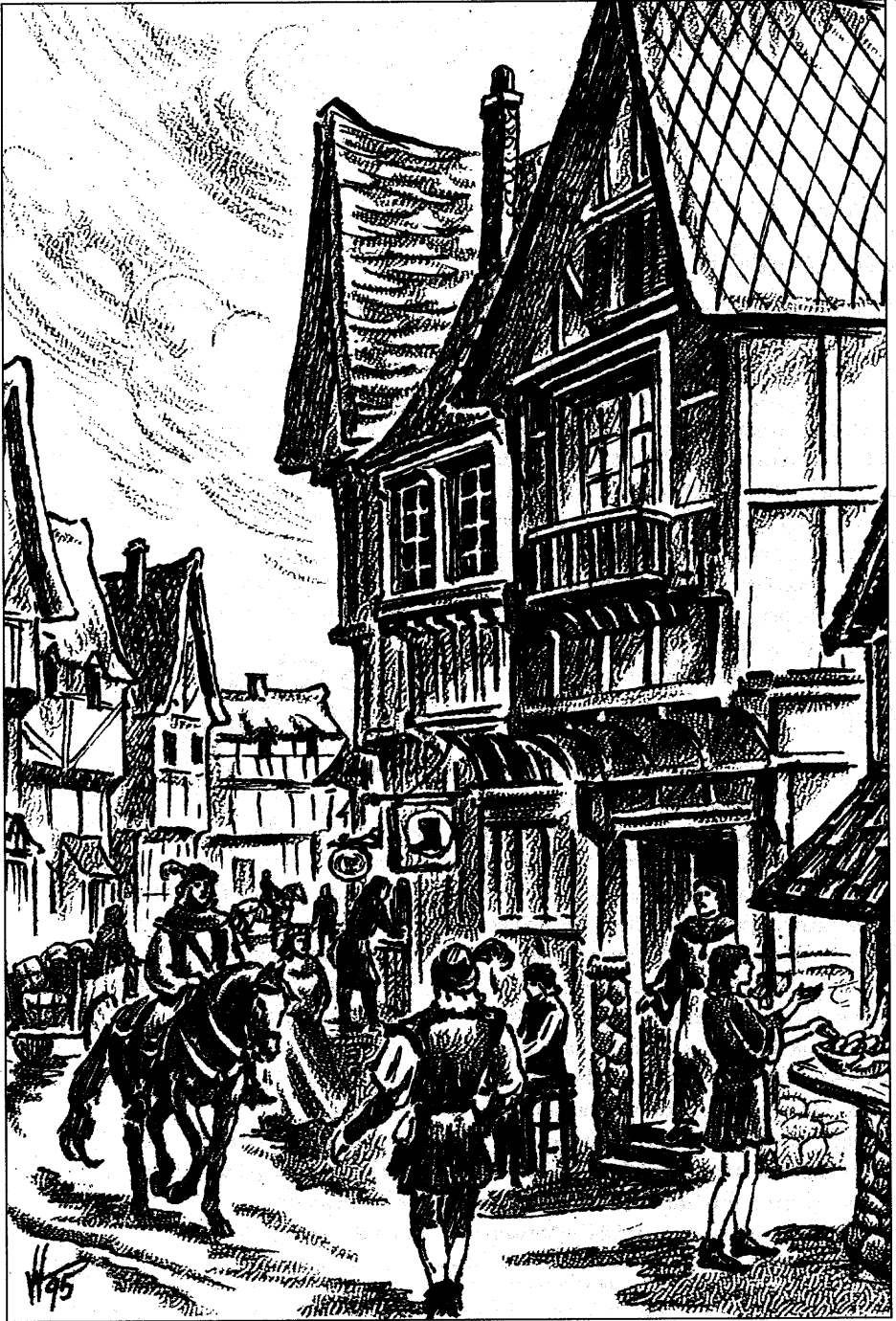
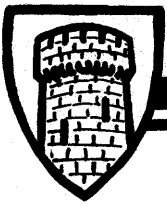
All four blades, when not in use, lie on velvet-covered plinths under crystal domes, each in a separate chamber at the Royal Court in Suzail, and the public can view them without charge. The swords are only displaced from these four great chambers when they are in use or when folk of royal blood have died. (Such nobles are laid in state on the biers normally reserved for the swords.) Visitors are urged to go and see these landmarks. Children go up to the blades on display and whisper their wishes (as do unrequited lovers) to the swords, for legend in Cormyr holds that the blades hear all told to them in confidence and act to aid the truly worthy of heart.

The Character of The Realm

In Cormyr, travelers will find a happy, even romantic people largely content with their lot. This is best illustrated in a famous Cormyrean saying first uttered by Baerauble, Lord High Mage of Cormyr. Like Vangerdahast, Baerauble was a wizard who safeguarded the realm through the reigns of several Obarskyrs. This saying is now inscribed on his tomb¹⁰ and has been adopted into everyday use by the people of Cormyr:

*The gods do not grant to us all
The shining mantle of the hero.
Do what you can,
And it will be enough.*

¹⁰The tomb stands at one end of the Chamber of the Purple Dragon, with the Obarskyr Throne at the other. It is guarded at all times by two Purple Dragons, but visitors are allowed to pray at it and even touch it for luck.





The Cities



Most folk of Cormyr live in the three cities of the realm: Suzail, Arabel, and Marsember. Persons who

deal in wealth or want to move in the circles of power in Cormyr and don't have the great good fortune to be born noble *must* dwell in Suzail or visit it often. Many shipborne merchants and other visitors to the Forest Kingdom have seen no more of Cormyr than its two port cities. There are even folk who live out their lives never setting foot outside the walls of Suzail, Arabel, and Marsember.

All three cities are given over to intrigue and gossip beyond the scope of this guide. Here I present a traveler's overview of interesting sights in Cormyr's cities. I can do no more, because I was repeatedly hampered by wrathful war wizards and Purple Dragons in my attempts to learn more. Yet it is my fond hope that travelers will find these pages useful in visits to Cormyr's three cities.

Suzail Overview

Suzail, the capital of the realm and Crown City of Cormyr, contains a busy port; the most beautiful gardens I've yet seen inside city walls anywhere; a magnificent palace; a large, labyrinthine, highly efficient Royal Court; the largest fortress of the Purple Dragons in all the realm; and the dwellings of thousands of hard-working, prosperous tradesfolk who seem to love their city. It is smaller, cleaner, and easier to get around in than most capitals I've

seen in Faerûn, and it is home to some establishments that pleasantly surprise the visitor who turns away from the splendor of the Promenade and the Royal Gardens long enough to take the trouble to seek them out.

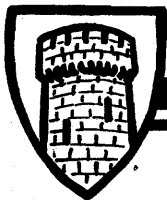
Marsember Overview

Marsember is an old, shabby, run-down metropolis of mildew where canals and docks are more numerous than streets, mysterious things are dropped from the bridges after dark, the stench of fish is ever-present, and there's not a live tree to be seen. Living here is very different from the romantic idea of living in Cormyr; it is the closest thing to living in a swamp that any city I know of offers. When it's not raining or storming furiously, with lightning stabbing down all around and howling winds whirling away everything not safely lashed down or behind shutters, heavy, clinging mists shroud the city.

A onetime pirate port independent of the realm of Cormyr, Marsember retains an air of shady dealings and corruption. Smuggling and money-laundering goes on here all the time, and there are even rumors that slave-taking lingers on behind the blank, shuttered faces of the old warehouses. I'd believe anything seedy of this place.

Arabel Overview

A frontier feeling still pervades the Caravan City of Cormyr, though the recent



addition of Tilverton to the realm is lessening Arabel's role as the base for prospectors, big-game hunters, Purple Dragons, adventurers bound for the Stonelands, and upland ranchers. Long an independent city-state, Arabel was the site of Condegall's short-lived court and retains surprisingly sophisticated shops and services for such a backland center. Like Suzail, the diligent work of the authorities and the amount to which they regulate affairs keeps the city clean, uncluttered, and relatively safe. It is the perfect waystop for weary caravan merchants bound for the heart of the realm or headed out to trade for the riches of the Moonsea and the Dales.

Dominated by overland trade and a long-established local gem industry Arabel is often threatened by Zhentarim forces.

The Zhentarim keep a watch on it from the Stonelands, though their feywing riders seldom dare to pass over the city itself, raiding caravans and wayfarers on the road when good opportunities befall. For this reason, the Purple Dragon forces in Arabel are ever-vigilant. They are always on patrol or on exercises that keep them active in the shadow of Arabel—the lands immediately north and east of the city as far afield as Redspring Castle Crag and Hillmarch. These lands are ideal grazing country because of their numerous ponds and rivulets, and so numerous shepherds and keepers of herds of goats, cattle, and other herd animals have come to live here over the years. Skirmishes in the shadow of Arabel are frequent, both because outlaws often come here and because Zhentarim never seem to learn blood lessons.



Suzail

The capital city of Cormyr¹ is a bustling, prosperous place, the monetary and cultural heart of the realm. It's always afire with new ideas, new ventures, new things to buy, and fresh ways of doing things. Fashion in Cormyr is set in Suzail, and with each passing year the city grows more important across Faerûn as a center of learning. King Azoun vigorously eradicates all attempts to form thieves' guilds and smuggling cabals, making this one of the safest cities in the Realms. It is also one of the wealthiest and cleanest, a place travelers love to visit and revisit.

Purple Dragon street patrols are numerous, and at any sign of trouble war wizards visibly accompany the soldiers. Curfews are also placed on the city to make it clear to all that no lawlessness is tolerated in Suzail. It should be noted that folk who have lawful business at night—loading or unloading a ship or shop delivery cart, for example—can always get license to break curfew, but they find themselves under the watchful eyes of an escort of at least three Purple Dragons all the time they're doing so.

As befits a busy trading center, the guards on the gate are always courteous to visitors unless their unseen war wizard overwatcher speaks within their heads to warn them they're facing a

Zhentarim or other evil mage, disguised monster, or known traitor to the Crown. Be advised that telling an intentional untruth to a guard on watch is an offense. It earns a Cormyrean a fine and placement on the ongoing list of people to question carefully for a year,² but usually wins an outlander a ban from entering the city on the spot.

CITIZENRY

Over 129,000 registered citizens call Suzail home. Purple Dragon estimates place the average headcount closer to 148,000, with the population rising to 160,000 at the height of the summer trading season. The citizens are defended by a garrison of 4,500 soldiers, the Imperial Navy of Cormyr, and 92 war wizards who're known to reside in the city.

DEFENDERS

Mighty 80-foot-high curtain walls protect the city on all landward fronts, and a broad street, the Promenade, links the two main gates in this rampart. The Promenade runs from Horngate to the west to Eastgate in an arc that separates the Court precinct from the rest of the city.³ Few attackers care to assault such a secure fortress. A large resident army mans those walls, and private citizens

¹A map of Suzail can be found in the chapter on Cormyr in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Setting* box, in the *Cormyr* game accessory or in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* hardbound.

²These punishments are assessed if an officer of the court judges so at the Royal Court. Purple Dragons aren't allowed to levy and collect their own fines. At any fining, both sides are allowed to argue their views. Appeals are possible but rarely granted. Such fines are usually 5 gp but may be as low as 2 gp or as high as 50 gp if the liar draws steel against a Purple Dragon and draws blood. The "question carefully" list is a roll of folk to whom the war wizard on gate duty pays careful attention, with the aid of a *detect lie* cast by an accompanying cleric if need be, while the guards conduct a thorough and time-wasting series of questions.

³All citizens know that a particular four-note horn call means they must leave the Promenade as fast as they can move. They're drilled in doing so about thrice a year.



can provide respectable support. Indeed, the wizard Maxer was accorded the title Defender of Suzail for slaying four dragons that attacked the city!

The garrison is based in the Citadel of the Purple Dragons at the southeast corner of Suzail, and it is led by Sthavar, Lord Magister of the City. Three hundred of these soldiers are on civic street patrol duty at a time. Purple Dragons on this duty are housed in auxiliary barracks around the city walls.

The Purple Dragons share their fortress with the Navy: 14 major ships and their crews, totaling over 2,500 trained sea warriors known as the Blue Dragons. The largest vessel, the *Crown of Cormyr*, is a floating palace. It is often used by the royal family to relax away from the eyes of the Court or to entertain guests in secret. Both it and the *Dragon*, Cormyr's largest warship, are well equipped with ballistae and firepot-hurlers. The presence of such ships serve to persuade Westgate and other maritime powers that Suzail is too well defended to harass, but it's the small, fast coastal runners of the fleet, like the *Blade of Espar* and the *Lance of Wheloon*, that see action most often. Almost daily they're active against piracy.⁴

Magecraft

Suzail is a major center of magical learning and power. It is home not only to the secretive College of War Wizards and Vangerdahast, Royal Magician to the Realm, but also the Council of Mages and such important

wizards as Argûl, Baskor, Laspeera, Maxer, and Valantha Shimmerstar.⁵

All mages of 5th or greater level who enter Cormyr must register before the next sundown with a king's herald, a local lord, or at the Court. Once on the rolls, they're welcome at meetings of the Council of Mages. These meetings are evening affairs held in the Court in Suzail once every three rides (tendays). Vangerdahast or, in the rare event of his absence, Laspeera chairs the meetings. At such gatherings, decrees of the Crown bearing on magic are proclaimed, issues of interest to workers with magic are discussed, and mages can advertise their services or their needs for the aid of other mages or would-be mages. Many a starry-eyed apprentice comes to such gatherings.

The war wizards always have a recruiting representative at council meetings. Those mages who are most loyal to the Crown can by free choice and Azoun's agreement swear a secret oath and become war wizards in the service of Cormyr. The oath is known to involve a *geas* cast by Vangerdahast that prohibits war wizards from working to the harm of Azoun, his family, or the good of his kingdom.

Worship

Suzail houses two major temples and several lesser shrines. The Towers of Good Fortune, dedicated to the worship of Tymora, stand on the east side of the Promenade where it meets the Royal Ride. The Silent Room, venerating

⁴The bottleneck of water between the Sea of Fallen Stars and the Lake of Dragons that is known as the Neck is a favorite pirate haunt, and rumors even today whisper that certain folk in Marsember are in league with privateers.

⁵These individual mages are described in Appendix I of this guidebook.



Deneir, is on the west side of the Promenade at the eastern end of the ornate iron fence that separates the street from the cobbled courtyards of the sprawling Royal Court building. For a fee of 5 gp per volume anyone can peruse books at the temple of Deneir, which houses a large library of both histories about and the fanciful fiction of the Dragonreach lands.

The city also holds shrines to Lliira, Oghma, Malar, Tyr, and Milil. Lliira's is located on the north side of Stonebow Street, between Torch Street to the west and Blade Lane on the east. Oghma's shrine is found on the west side of the Promenade, just inside Eastgate. Malar's shrine crouches on the north side of the Royal Ride a few doors west of the shrine of Tyr, and Tyr's shrine is perched in the angle where the Promenade and the Royal Ride meet. Finally, the shrine to Milil can be found on the west side of Coachwheels Way just north of Blade Lane.

Trade

Those with coins enough to spend can get almost as wide a selection of fine goods in the shops of Suzail as in fabled Waterdeep. Musical instruments, cloth, finished garments, sword blades, and armor in plenty are made in the city. From the docks these products, as well as copper bars mined near Espar, grain (sold in 25-lb. sacks, but priced by the quintal or hundredweight), and bone carvings from the uplands of the realm are exported. Most folk of other lands don't think of Suzail as a source of fine armor and blades, but they do remember the city for the good, durable, every-

day woolen clothes that are often trimmed with leather it produces.

In the past, sail-making and shipbuilding were important industries in Suzail. Almost all such trade has moved to Marsember and smaller coastal communities as land has become more valuable in Suzail and the transport of lumber into the shipyards has become an increasingly slow and expensive process. The Citadel of the Purple Dragons still uses its repair slips; lumber inbound there is usually floated in over the city wall by the spells of war wizards.

Resident shopkeepers sometimes use tally sticks in their dealings, but the visitor must pay in cash. In earlier days when coins were scarce, two sorts of trade tokens were used in Suzail. These flat, shaped pieces of wood branded with a treasury stamp are still honored, and Suzailans can turn them in to the Royal Court at double face value when they are used toward tax payments. The two sorts of discs are the anvil and the wheel, and they are shaped accordingly. Five anvils equal a wheel, and a wheel is worth 1 gp, so an anvil is worth 2 sp. Anvil and wheel trade tokens haven't been made for 30 years, so one can tell something about the age of found money caches by their presence.

The Nobility

The noble families of Cormyr are a large, influential, and constant presence in Suzail. Their fashions, free-handed spending intrigues, and entertainments—in particular, their costume balls, feasts, and hunts—set the tone of the city.

Most noble families have homes in Suzail, some of them quite modest build-



ings hidden away on back streets. Tradition and comfort matter more to the nobles than opulence, except to the recently ennobled and merchants trying to buy their way into the nobility.

Suzailans see a side of their proud and mighty nobles that few others in Cormyr ever observe: Suzail hosts many nobles' parties held in the Royal Court on fine evenings. All too often, these affairs become debauched revels spilling over into the Royal Gardens. Many trysts are kept, arguments begun, and insults and witticisms exchanged at such events.

Fashion

In the streets of Suzail, half-cloaks, full-sleeved shirts or bodices, slim jeweled blades, and ornate masks mark one as a

noble or a wealthy would-be noble.

Cormyreans like to dress as dashing adventurers. Even folk who've never held a sword in their lives sport half-armor of *everbright* silver for formal wear or adopt the flared-boots, laced-leather-and-vest look of the reckless *vivant*. As dress goes in Suzail, so goes fashion in the rest of the realm, from feathers in hats to glitter-weave doublets. At least regal blue and dusty beige are favored colors now, so the finery doesn't tend to be hard on a visitor's eyes.

Fairs

Most Suzailans haven't the energy left at the end of their workday for evening revelry. They meet with friends at a favorite local tavern to talk over a tankard or two,



and then stumble home to bed. This tendency of the average Suzailan to congregate in small taverns is why visitors bearing news are so popular and good storytellers can earn a copper or two for a tale. Those Suzailans too drunk to be moved from their pub seat are usually carted to a back room of the tavern to snore their drink off. Just about every tavern in the city has a snoring room for this purpose, and tavernmasters who put customers in one are entitled to take from each of their purses the cost of one drink of the most expensive sort they've drunk that evening.

Entertainment for Suzailans comes in the form of day-long fairs and festivals. Most shops close down for these celebrations, which consist of all the usual seasonal feasts—Creengrass, Midsummer, Deadwinter Day, and the like—plus hiring fairs in spring, summer, and fall, and the Festival of the Sword. Hiring fairs⁶ are gatherings of journeymen skilled in a trade held so that prospective employers can select new employees. The choice offered by a large selection of skilled craftsfolk pleases the employers, and such public hirings deny any merchants the opportunity to hire a desperate worker unfairly, dirt-cheap, to later undersell their rivals.

The Festival of the Sword, held on the fourth day of Kythorn, is unique to Suzail, representing the importance of the arms trade to the city. It consists of a mounted parade of people dressed in the best armor their shops make who gallop

around the streets as fast as safely possible (and sometimes faster!), waving blades, bellowing war cries, and sounding horns. They entertain the populace with their thundering progress until the Citadel bells toll, whereupon they all race to the gates in the ornate fence of the Royal Court. There they enter into the Court and are toasted with fine wine, sherries, and exotic liqueurs.

After thirsts have been slaked, these gallant armed folk look out through the fence into an area of the Promenade kept clear for the Triumph of the Sword. Many other townsfolk also gather around this area to watch a fully armored fighter combat and slay monsters. When the battle is done, the fighter casts the killing blade into the air and general feasting begins.

Of old, the monsters slain by the fighter were people in costumes, and the battle was play-acting. Later, real monsters were brought in, caged, and the battle was in earnest—and often deadly for the fighter! These days, captured jackals and leucrotta that war wizards have magically altered into the shapes of monsters are slain. These beasts aren't given time to become familiar with their new bodies, nor do they command any special powers of the beasts whose shapes they wear (for example, dragon or gorgon breath).

Suzail has one other interesting festival: Chasing the King. It is celebrated on the sixth day of Marpenoth. It seems Boldovar Obarskyr, who reigned briefly some centuries ago, was a wildbeard, or

⁶Hiring fairs are different from trade fairs. Trade fairs are held in smaller communities as a way of attracting merchants who otherwise wouldn't bother to travel to them (thus never giving local folk the chance to buy their goods). A locksmith, for example, wouldn't normally bother to come to Hillmarch, but the folk there would occasionally like to buy reasonably priced locks from a selection, not make do with a peddler's single, vastly overpriced lock. So, trade fairs are held.



madman. Although he was usually of calm and normal temperament, he'd suddenly fly into berserk, killing rages, seize a weapon, and set off across the city hacking and slashing at everything and everyone who got into his way until dusk. He eventually perished as a result of driving his blade through his favorite consort, who was trying to soothe him and stop one of these rampages. Her falling body dragged the king, who wouldn't let go of his sword, over the edge of a parapet. He was impaled on an array of upright lances bundled for transport on a cart standing below.

In the present-day festival, the unfortunate king is represented by a criminal already condemned to death. This miscreant is given a blunt sword, encased in full armor, and furnished with a belt of *potions of healing*. Then he's let into the streets and not allowed out of the city until sundown. (Some men have shed their armor and swum the harbor or crawled through the sewers to get out of Suzail earlier.)

Anyone who likes can attack the fleeing "king," who can't run with any weapon but the one he was given and can do anything on his run without fear of reprisal. (The "king" is allowed to seize weapons raised against him and use them on their wielders.) One fleeing "king" set several streets ablaze, which kept a lot of folk too busy to harm him, but he tried to hide in the smoke and died. Townsfolk usually don't have to worry about being struck down by surprise by the fleeing miscreant. He's usually at the center of a whirlwind of

barking dogs, running boys, and jeering journeymen.

If the false king can stay alive until dusk, he is fully healed by a priest of Tempus hired for the occasion, given 50 sp, a good horse, food, and clothing, and he goes free. Several criminals have so won their freedom in recent years. The criminal must agree to play the king, but the lord chamberlain chooses who is asked.

I wasn't able to get all of Suzail's celebrations straight, but there are at least two each month throughout the year. Each is an excuse for parades, drunken revelry, minstrelry, wrestling in the streets, and eating far, far too much! The day after each festival all businesses except restaurants are closed. Most folk spend it visiting family and friends and dining out.

A Look Across The City

The northern part of Suzail is all tall, narrow, grand houses that are complemented by the rolling greenery of the spacious Royal Gardens. The spectacular bulk of the Palace of the Purple Dragon and the Royal Court rise out of this. But what lies outside the wide arc of the Promenade? Well, the bad part of town stretches to the west, near the harbor around the open market. Some gentlefolk never venture there. To the east stands the Market Hall, into which farmers from outside the city stream at dawn to sell their fresh produce to sleepy-eyed servants.⁷ Also to the east lie the city garrison (the Citadel of the Purple Dragons) and the city jail (the Lock-Up).

⁷Visitors often confuse the market at the west end of the city, where one buys tools, furniture, clothing, and gewgaws, and the Market Hall on the east side of Suzail, where merchants meet and farmers sell food.



Between the far east side and the far west side of town lie bustling, close-crowded shops, houses, and inns. These tend to be more expensive and taller nearer the Palace of the Purple Dragon and cheaper, noisier, and more run-down as one nears the docks. The oldest noble families almost all dwell north of the Promenade.

The docks are a whirlwind of activity apt to be dangerous to the bystander. Overloaded carts and overloaded burden-bearers are constantly rushing about, cursing each other and their loads. The harbor is a place of few entertainments. The stink of rotting fish is strong, and it is good place to watch gulls mate and paint the countryside white. Except for the ever-popular pastime of watching ships from far-off ports arrive and leave, and seeing their exotic crews and the lady escorts of Suzail who come to meet or bid good-bye to them, there isn't much to do.

The city has a wealth of shops, inns, and taverns, and boasts some truly splendid restaurants. Eating out is a citywide pleasure and tradition. A fast-growing custom is to have gourmet meals run in—that is, delivered hot to one's abode.

By night, *continual faerie fire* radiances light up the Promenade with bright amber tones. These radiances also illuminate major cross streets at each intersection, but appear less frequently than on the Promenade. They make Suzail less smoky than some cities, as torches and candle lamps are fewer, and

frequent Purple Dragon patrols render even the darkest streets relatively safe.

Landmarks

Although Suzail is a busy port with shops and eateries of sophistication and reputé, its most important building is the Royal Court. The Palace of the Purple Dragon, of course, is more magnificent, but the Court is unique: a sprawling labyrinth of interconnected buildings, erected and expanded over the centuries as needed. The turrets in one place may clash with the sloping roofs in another, but the assembled pile stretches along almost a quarter mile of the Promenade and is undeniably impressive. The Court's several thousand chambers are connected by arches, servants' passages concealed discreetly behind tapestries, cross-galleries, balconies, and sweeping stairs. The Court has its own deep wells, its own streets (in the cellars), and even enclosed glass-roofed courtyards where fountains gurggle softly and harpists are wont to play.

This grand structure houses the legal and administrative bureaucracy of the government of Cormyr, from the offices of Alaphondar, Sage Most Learned of the Royal Court⁸ to the rooms of Anzser, Lord Chamberlain of Suzail and Master of City Revels, who oversees the issuance of all permits, licenses, city ordinances, and tax writs.⁹ Royal guides and escorts wait here and royal surveyors work on their maps

⁸Alaphondar is the expert on the history, genealogy, and court law of Cormyr.

⁹The post of lord chamberlain was introduced in response to long-ago plague problems, when plague spreading became a crime. The position began as the overseer of refuse carts leaving the city and fresh food and water carts entering Suzail. During plague times thieves were claiming folk had plague and slaying them, seizing all their valuables, and then burning their homes in order to return to the cooled ashes later and look for cached coins. The creation of the position of lord chamberlain took away such thieves' ability to perform such vigilante acts and claim that they were acting legally.



and charts here. This the heart of power—and intrigue—in Cormyr.

The Court even has its very own fishpond where salmon, trout, and silverfin swim until they're caught with dip nets for use in meals at the Court and Palace. Court cooks feed these fish every day and also tend to a smaller eel pool.¹⁰ So large and confusingly laid out is the Court that one can wander its chambers all day and fail to see everything—or to find a particular room or person one is seeking.

Guests at court are usually housed in apartments in the Royal Court. Only rarely, since assassination attempts have grown numerous, do even the most exalted guests stay in the Palace.

Upland Cormyreans speak of the Royal Court with reverence: It's their place amid the nobles' halls and the grand villas of the wealthy, second only to the Palace itself. At one end of it stands the Hall of Honor, where one can see the arms, armor, and other relics of the heroes of Cormyr—from the pitchfork that the farmer Jult of Waymoot defended an early queen of Cormyr with when she was menaced by orcs to the 7-foot-long boar blade wielded by the giant Baron Hlombur when he split the skull of the orc lord Aragh. (It is displayed, of course, with the riven skull.) Everyone is welcome to see the glories of the past and take pride in the valiant deeds of forebears here.

Along the many south-facing windows of the Court runs the broad Promenade, the most important street in Suzail and one of the best shopping strolls in the world. On the other side of the Court, the rolling green beauty of the trees, lawns,

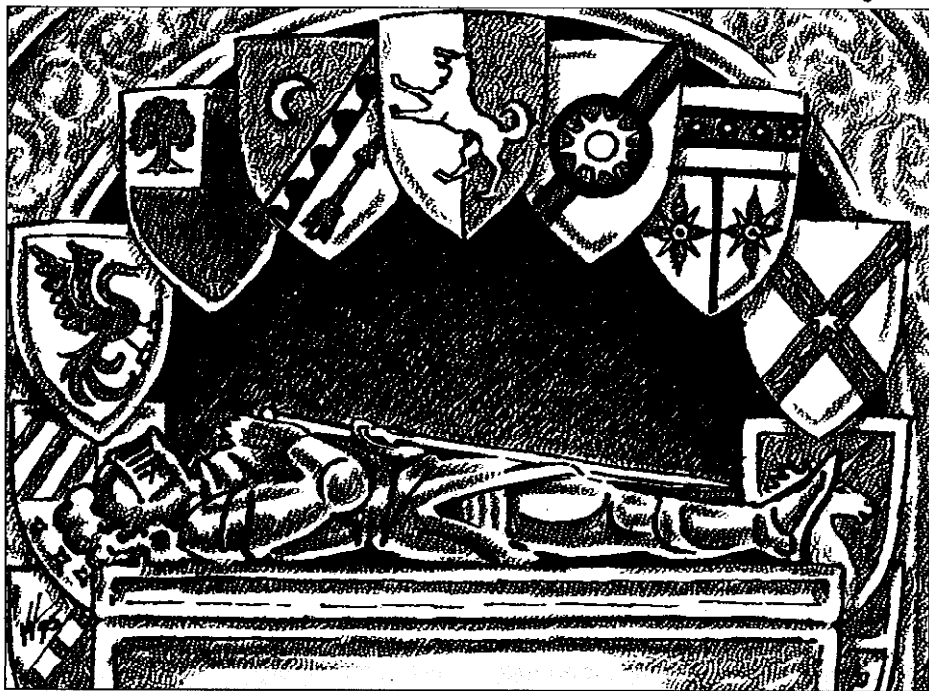
mazes, fountains, and flower beds of the Royal Gardens stretch out all around, down to the glimmering waters of Lake Azoun, where in warm months pleasure sculls await and swans glide. At one end of the Court, across a small strip of cobbled court where three watchful wizards always stand guard, rises Vangerdahast's Tower, the darkly slender abode of the Royal Magician to the Realm and Chairman Emperius of the College of War Wizards.

Many tales of magic, messages, maps, and inscriptions hidden behind the paneling of the Court's rooms make the rounds in Cormyr, and most are true. Also true, however, is the far-less-often-heard rumor of diligent magical eavesdropping by loyal war wizards carried on constantly in every chamber and back passage of the Court. Visitors are warned!

The Palace of the Purple Dragon rises out of the wooded Royal Gardens like a fairy-tale castle, all slender spires, balconies, and pennants. It houses private apartments for all four families of the blood royal: the ruling Obarskysrs, the Crownsilvers, the Huntsilvers, and the Truesilvers. The opulence of its tapestry- and painting-hung chambers is legendary. It is a rare thing for a Cormyrean to be invited inside: "He's been to the Palace!" is a sentence uttered with awe in upland villages of Cormyr.

The Royal Treasury under the Palace is also famous, though very few visitors have ever seen it. The vaults are said to be heavily guarded by magic, traps, and monsters, and to hold great wealth and magical treasures. The truth of these rumors has been confirmed by many archmages over the

¹⁰Freshwater eels have recently come to be considered a delicacy in Suzail, especially when accompanied by exotic sauces. Cooks each have their own secret recipes.



years, including the Zhentarim magelord who tried to seize all he could and ended up blown to bloody mist in front of all the Cormyrean court when a stolen device he was carrying went off.

The city also boasts some impressive statues. Even at intersections not guarded by such offerings look for carved beasts on building corners. The gargoyles at the meeting of Dragonfall Alley and Ustor's Street are particularly fine, and like several such specimens around the city, locals swear they can fly off to fight to defend Suzail if one but gives the right command.

What follows is description of a few of the more spectacular or fine establishments of the city, although it is not an exhaustive listing of all places worthy of note.

Places of Interest in Suzail

Shops

As well as the large, signboarded shops, countless small businesses dot the streets of Suzail. I remind the traveler to look at doors for chalked messages like: "Mushrooms Sold" or "Herbs." Many women who keep to the home make cloaks or fruit cakes or keep a milk cellar, and many lads can be hired on the street for loading or unloading carts or ships at the docks.

Suzailan shopkeepers sometimes use tally sticks when dealing with each other rather than cash. These tally sticks are wands notched by passing Purple Dragons in a particular way. The Royal Court oversees such exchanges and metes out sentences for the dishonest.



A miscreant shopkeeper is often chained to a stone chair in the Market Hall for a day. Not only does he lose a day's takings, his punishment is also to have defective wares hung around his neck or burnt at his feet. If he sells bad produce, wine, ale, or scent, it is poured or smeared over him. Visitors committing such crimes are punished the same way and then suffer confiscation of all goods. They are then exiled outside the realm for the season as fast as they can be escorted by the next Purple Dragon road patrol.

Belaeron's Best Bread

Baker



This small, aromatic shop on Low Lantern Lane produces bread for customers for 3 coppers a loaf the morning after they bring in their dough. It is typical of the turn-your-dough-into-loaves quickshops found here and there in most cities around the Inner Sea. Belaeron's also bakes his own wares: hard biscuits, wheel loaves, and tarts. He sells them for a flat 1 sp per basket. A basket holds 50 or so biscuits, three loaves, and nine or so mince tarts—and you get to keep the flimsy wicker basket.

The Ring of Coins

Pawnshop



This pawnshop on Torch Street is known for the variety of wares it offers. It's where bailiffs, next of kin, and adventurers bring oddities they can't be bothered trying to peddle. As a result, one can find many sets of thieving tools, outdated fur-

niture, wild costumery, canes that fold into stools, lamps carved to look like leaping lions, and the like. The selection is always interesting, but some of what's offered for sale may be stolen goods.

Tavernant's Tellings

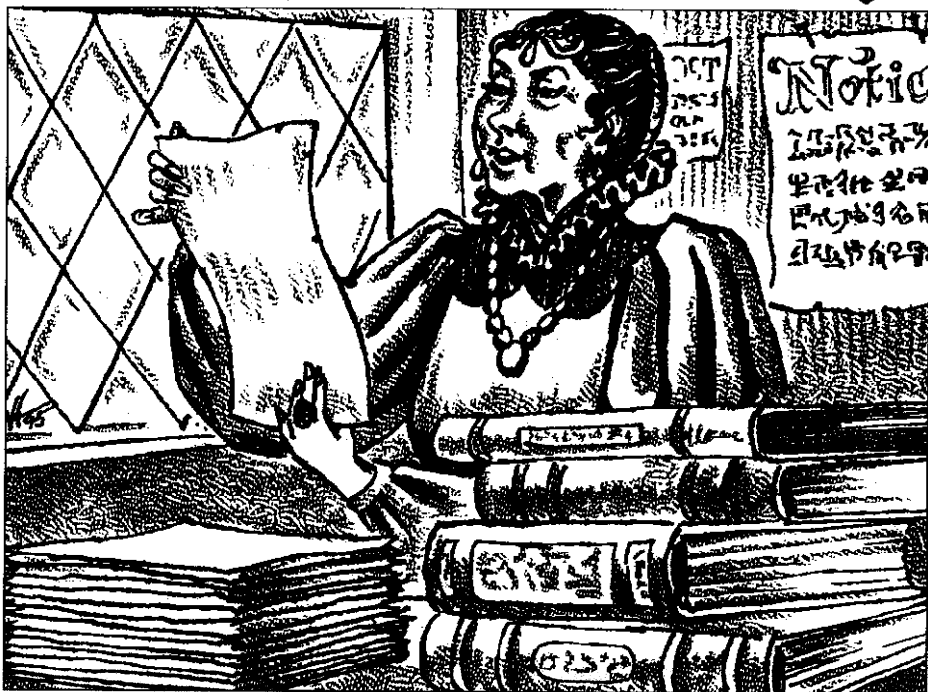
Printer



Printers are still a rarity in the Dragonreach lands, and they command high prices. Lady Tavernant, the elderly and eccentric last of her line, loves to give parties where she can befriend young and dashing noblemen, and she grew tired of the time and expense of having handwritten invitations done up for each such occasion. So she started her own print shop, where linen rag paper is made and printing is done.

To manufacture a printed invitation or broadsheet, the paper is made page by page by dipping trays with mesh bottoms into the pulp. The paper is then dried, the sheets removed from the trays, and the paper edges trimmed as desired. Metal is poured into molds engraved by a hired goldsmith to form individual letters. These letters are assembled in wooden frames by hand, along with woodcuts for illustrations. The frames are then laid in recesses in stone and inked, whereupon sheets of paper are slid into the press and screwed down onto the inked pages.

A single sheet of type takes a day or more to compose, costs 5 gp, and every copy of it is another 1 sp thereafter. Copies must all be ordered within a ten-day. After that, the wooden form is stripped so the type can be reused.



Books bound and covered by the printer cost 1 gp per page plus any costs for exotic substances used on the coverboards of the book such as tooled copper, gems, or dragonhide.

Lady Tavernant's shop is roaringly popular, and several merchants are scrambling to set up competing shops. Almost every business in town has had advertising broadsheets, notices about new or seasonal wares, or menus (in the case of restaurants) printed and posted, and the first lost-and-found and items-wanted postings are beginning to appear on walls and posts. The owners of stone buildings have even taken to coming out with torches and burning off unwanted notices.¹¹

The Wedding Knight

Fine Clothes



This stiffly expensive shop on the Street of Staves sells finery to nobles, fops, and others desperate for just the right look—as long as the desired look is overdone and visibly expensive. Brushed velvet and cloth-of-gold are everywhere. Glittering gems adorn most hems, and the flash and sparkle of minor lighting spells can be seen as the models employed by the shop drift silkily around the carpeted aisles. The Wedding Knight is a provisioning place for those who want to “make a scene at a scene,” as the old saying goes.

¹¹This is, in fact, the origin of the Suzailan expression scorched news, as in: “Have you heard about Thaal the butcher? All over town they’re saying it—’tis the latest scorched!”



Clubs

Suzail is a city of clubs. Just about everyone, from the people who run the manure carts of night soil to dungyards well north of the city¹² to the haughtiest old-blood nobles, belongs to at least one of these gathering places. A rule common to most such places is that a member can bring just one guest.

Most clubs serve food and drink and provide sleeping rooms for members who'd rather not stay at an inn or their own homes for various reasons—from lack of coin to wishing to go about unobserved to domestic strife. Some of the more unusual clubs include:

Bindle's



The club to be seen in this season, this nose-in-the-air establishment is a place to eat both berry-filled and savory tarts, drink your choice of the contents of extensive cellars, and chat with friends. Spells convey soft singing and minstrelry around the rooms to ensure your conversation can be heard only from close by, and the waitresses are clad in the illusions of leaping flames. Their blazing limbs provide the best sources of light since faintly glowing tables are the only ever-present radiances, so waitresses asked to stand close to customers aren't usually being asked to do anything improper.

Merchants have adopted this club as a place to talk serious business and sign agreements. Lately, these businesspeople are beginning to hire actors to pose as drunks. The fake drunks then persis-

tently annoy young nobles whose rowdy carousing makes dining unpleasant or dangerous for the businessfolk until the rowdy people leave. The once-haughty owners are learning that merchants pay better than nobles.

The Osculatory



The Osco is a meeting place for single Suzailans avidly seeking companionship. Its name means *kissing club*. This noisy, crowded place is a dimly lit labyrinth of secluded tables and curtained booths. All seating is clustered around one dance floor or another, and each floor has its own merry minstrels.

The Osco's apt to become wild when the hour is late and many tankards have been emptied; public displays of affection are everywhere. Those interested can find it behind the purple door at the north end of Dancing Druid Lane.

The Society of Stalwart Adventurers



Home to explorers and adventurers, this exclusive club is housed in an old, luxurious mansion boasting many fireplaces and stuffed monsters' heads. The monster heads are usually hung with caps and items of personal clothing as a result of revelry. It also has an extensive library of old adventurers' journals—both members' writings and other tomes aggressively purchased from all over Faerûn or copied from originals at Candlekeep.

The stews are excellent here, and they don't, I was assured, consist of monster

¹²Farmers get fertilizer here.



kills. If any of the serving staff has fangs, horns, claws, and occasionally tentacles—well, its ranks include a few doppelgangers given to pranks or to impersonations for practical reasons.

Seek the lantern-flanked dragonstone archway on Swordstars Lane. Nonmembers are challenged at the door. Don't be surprised if the butler looks less—or more—than human. Guests are only allowed into two anterooms off the entrance hall.

The Stag Transfixed



The haunt of archers, crossbowmen, and hunters who use darts, this dim, smoky place is just the place to go if you want to hire lads and wenches who can put a

shaft through your least favorite foe's left eyeball by night and from around a corner. That is, it's the right location *if* you have coin enough to make them break off their endless tales and quaffing of strong stout to listen.

Seek the green door at the south end of Lonesome Lane. All weapons must be checked with Clarella at the entrance.

Restaurants

Suzail has a lot of restaurants, and many come and go with the seasons. They reappear only for the trade rush in the warm months under new names and in new places to exploit the tax break the lord chamberlain gives to all new businesses. Moreover, a wide variety of services go by the title of restaurant, from shuttered dockside windows that serve



hot fish rolls and watered ale to haughty establishments where each diner has a personal waiter. Out of this spectrum everyone has his or her favorites. The entire restaurant roster could fill this book, so I'll mention just two places worthy of the visitor's attention.

The Old Boot



The name of this establishment refers defiantly to the conservative, elderly patrons who frequent it.¹³ They like peace, quiet, good food, warm and private rooms to eat in with friends, and short waits for hot meals, and the Boot delivers all of these. This also makes the Boot ideal for the weary traveler who wants a good feed without any hassles or surprises. The tendency of the staff to put any outlander in his own room in order to not to offend the haughty regulars is ideal for someone who just wants to enjoy their meal. The experience is like dining in one's own mansion—if one's mansion has a competent but uninspired cook. Don't expect strong seasonings.

The Puffing Jester



The Puffing Jester has a service that delivers gourmet meals to your door. The delivery runners dress in belled caps like the jesters of yore and are often out of breath when they arrive. The food may or may not be hot, but it usually began its brief life as something worth eating.

A former bread shop, the Jester doesn't offer any sit-down eating, but some folk love to come and stand by the door to smell the cooking and watch the sweating, cursing crews—in those caps!—wrestling trays of savory tarts or long spits of roast fowl around the steaming kitchen. I've tucked a favorite Jester recipe in at right; its portions are generous enough to feed a family.

Taverns

Suzail is well furnished with watering holes, just as it is with restaurants. I set forth but a pair for your guidance and appreciation. If the evening is fine, a stroll down the city's back streets in search of a new tankard toss¹⁴ is always worth the time.

The Golden Goblin



The Golden Goblin is the strutter's thirst-drowner. Here angry men come looking for fights, and folk who want you to think they're as tough as stone statues stand, drinks in hand, acting as tough as—stone statues. This is all amusing to watch if you're writing a book about swaggering adventurers but is a bit much for an old shopkeeper who wants to put his feet up with a tankard.

A huge statue of a goblin leers from a perch on a shelf on the wall behind the bar. It lights the place with a golden *continual light* radiance. It's not a magical statue, so don't bother it.

¹³Elminster: In Cormyr, the term *old boot* is used where you would say *old fogey*.

¹⁴Tankard toss is the Suzailan slang term for a tavern.

Roast Gammon Pie



- 1 large ham (Be it as large as a hog's head or greater!)
- 1 large goose egg
- 1 cup dried flamefruit¹⁵
- 1/2 cup zzar
- 1/2 cup brandy
- 3/4 cup honey
- 1 fist of butter¹⁶
- 2 large onions
- 4 sticks celery
- 3 cups pecan nuts
- 4 cups of the juice of any fruit
- 3 spoons of mustard¹⁷
- 1 finger¹⁸ of ground cloves
- 1 finger of ground coriander
- The rind of any fruit

And for the pastry jacket:

- 2 cups milk
- 2 cups flour
- 1 handful of salt
- 1 pinch of dried sage
- 4 eggs

Take ye the flamefruit and chop it fyne. Take also the onions and the celery and chop them. Dice also thy pecans, and syng them in the hearth flames so they give off a slight smell but be not burned. Let the oven, wherein the pie be cooked anon, be made hop and kept that way. A brick bread oven is best for this.

When all be readie, mix the chopped ingredients in a bowl. Stir the mustard and all liquid ingredient together in another bowl, last breaking the goose's egg and stirring it in, too. Then stir into this the bowl of choppings.

Take ye the ham and bone it, and into the cavity pack the mixed ingredients. (Set aside the bone for stock.) Sew up the ham with fyne twine, and wet the seam well. Prop upward with stones on an oven tray against spillage. Put in the oven.

Turn ye to another task, so that goodly time passes.¹⁹ Then take the gammon out of the oven to let stand as you prepare the pastry.

In another bowl, break in the eggs, retrieving the shells. Mix in the rest of the pastry makings and beat well. When all is a stiff froth, brush well over all the gammon, letting no part be uncovered, and put in the oven again. Set to warm nearby a covered roasting pan. When the pie is light brown, take it from the oven and put it in the heated pan.

Cover and hurry to the customer. Open not the pan until you are at their door. The pie should then be a golden brown.

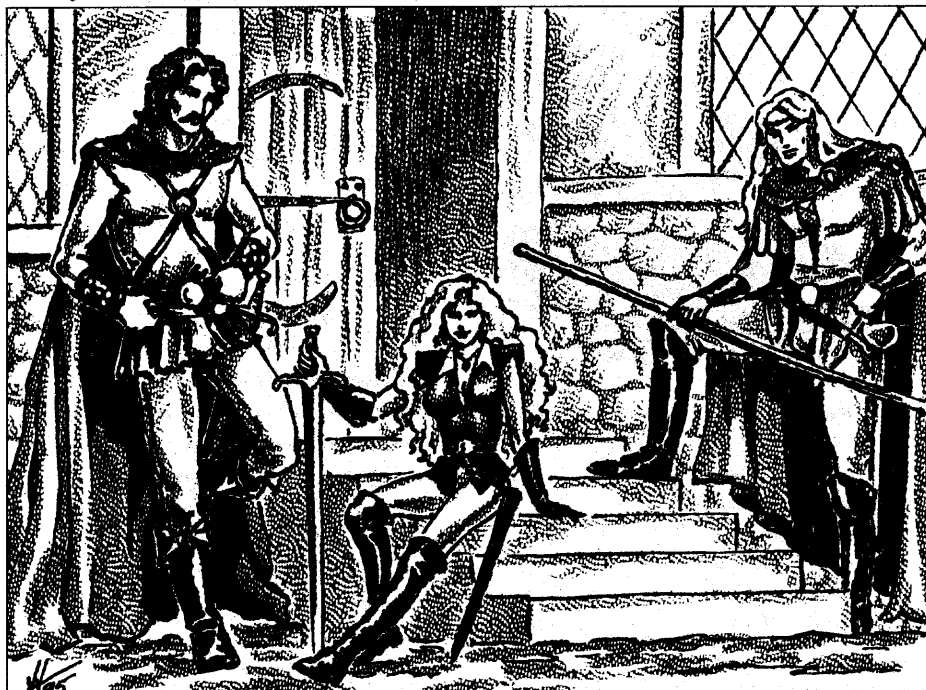
¹⁵Elminster: Substitute apricots.

¹⁶Elminster: Unsalted, of course. Only barbarians salt their butter.

¹⁷A lot of mustard is grown in the east reaches of Cormyr.

¹⁸A finger of spice is, of course, a heap large enough to stay on a cook's finger. For those who do not appreciate doing balancing acts, just thinly cover the top of your thumb with dried spice and that's enough.

¹⁹Cook it for just under half an hour the first time and a little less than that long for the second baking with the pastry on.



The Laughing Lass



The Lass is a cozy, orderly place that is kept that way by a polite but alert—and large—staff of bouncers. Purple Dragons and war wizards know they're not welcome here when in uniform and on duty since sailors, hireswords, and adventurers gather here to drink and make deals.

The tavern's name reflects its other use as a makeshift festhall. Veteran adventurers are well aware that the best way to fence stolen goods, make contact with outlaws, or arrange shady deals in the city is with the help of one of Suzail's lovely professional escorts in a stout-walled room upstairs at the Lass. True veterans even remember to finish their drinks.

INNS

Suzail has many inns, and frugal people also find that many Suzailans with space to spare rent upper rooms by the ten-day—look for notices at the Market Hall and at both city gates. Most inns rent rooms by the month between the Feast of the Moon (late fall) and Greengrass (early spring). Prices range from 25 to 65 gp; most are 50 gp.

Here are a few inns that welcome outlanders and adventurers:

The Dragon's Jaws



Formerly Suzail's most famous tavern, this popular establishment recently



began renting rooms and so must now be considered an inn. Situated at the southwest corner where the Promenade and the Street of Staves meet, the Jaws is handy for visitors entering the city by Eastgate. Its is my favorite place to stay in Suzail, even if you're apt to meet dangerous folk in the taproom.²⁰

To Suzailans the Jaws is a place to meet for business, to gather to gossip, and to sit and watch competitions—and visitors. The good wine cellar and even better food of the Jaws are justly praised, and it is almost always crowded when open. An artfully placed *stone of silence*²¹ keeps the din of the taproom away from folk trying to sleep in the back (inn) wing. The Jaws's dining room is open dawn to dusk only; tavern hours are dusk until dawn.

Much of the enjoyment most patrons derive from a visit is due to the swift, anticipatory hospitality of the dwarf bartender Milo Dudley. Milo sees all and is ready for any patron's need—be it a refill, a bodyguard, or a place to sleep off the effects of overindulgence—before the need becomes imminent.

If Milo is the perfect friend and servant, the gnome owner of the Jaws, Gnorm, is the life of the party of evenings at the Jaws, greeting regulars by name and with a new (bad) joke for them to enjoy. A retired adventurer, he's the inn's resident champion at the

frequent eventide tale-telling or axe, knife, or halfling tossing bouts. Gnorm doesn't serve patrons, however. If queried, he'll explain that he's retired, after all.²²

Many adventurers and sightseers seek out the Jaws because it's the site of two famous battles. The adventurer Samhrin once unmasked, fought, and slew a mind flayer in the taproom. The same chamber was largely destroyed when the evil Dramordugas of Thay picked a fatal quarrel with a saucy, young female mage who turned out to be a gold dragon! She apologized afterward and donated most of the dead Red Wizard's wealth to repairing the place.

The money paid for an expansion along with the repairs that made possible the Dragon's Jaws's subsequent change to an inn. This latter encounter also gave the tavern its present name and led Vangerdahast to implement security measures to protect the nearby Royal Court and Palace of the Purple Dragon.²³ At the time of the incident, it was known as the Red Sword.

The Leaning Post



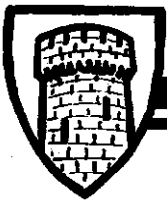
This quiet, good inn doesn't offer many frills—just quiet surroundings, simple but good furnishings and service, and secure stabling. “No headaches” is the motto of the staff.

²⁰See the novel *Once Around the Realms*, by Brian Thomsen (TSR, Inc., 1995).

²¹A fist-sized stone upon which a mage has cast a *continual silence*. This spell is cast for hire in many places up and down the Vilhon Reach, where crowding—and thus, noise—has long been a problem.

²²Many patrons claim to have found the waitresses even friendlier than Milo and Gnorm, but the frequently told and inaccurate tales about their character have no place in this or any other guidebook. Molly Sara, Rustreene and the rest are just very welcoming ladies, that's all.

²³Secret passages, wands, and war wizards are said to be involved.



The Post stands on the north side of Garth Street where it meets the Hunt Bide and is owned by Barandos Hawklin, an important deal-maker in Suzail and head of the Hawklin noble family. It reflects his unflinching standards for no-nonsense quality.

The Nightgate Inn



Standing hard by Eastgate and just outside the city walls, the Nightgate is the only lodging accessible to travelers arriving after the city gates are shut at dusk. It looks like a fort²⁴ and boasts stone walls fully as thick as the Citadel. This makes it damp and gloomy year-round, but roaring fires keep the cavernous common room toasty even at the height of winter gales.

The same can't be said for your room, though; the canopies are on the four-posters for a reason. Be sure to take your "bedmate" with you: It's a pull-cart whose wheel comes off, leaving you with a cloth-wrapped bundle of bricks that have warmed by the fire. Undo the ties at the top and bottom to get two bags of bricks, then lay them on either side of you and you can go to sleep in warmth and comfort—until creeping cold awakens you just before dawn!

The food here is adequate and the stable care superior, but for the prices, *something* had better be!

Shaliber's Ship



This unusual accommodation is a leaky merchant cog moored more-or-less permanently at Bolliver's Wharf across from the foot of the Court Close.²⁵ A floating inn owned by Maerun Stoutbold, marine merchant,²⁶ the vessel was seized from Shaliber, a debtor who couldn't pay up. Shaliber is said to be scheming to get it back, probably by sneaking a crew aboard and trying to sail it out of the harbor, sleeping guests and all, some dark night!

Payment for a night's stay is in advance, but Maerun asks no questions of his guests. If you want to have a brawl in your room or carry aboard a bound, struggling captive, this is the place to stay. (By a curious series of ongoing coincidences, the chamberpots are usually emptied down the gangplank by the "enthusiastic hurl" method *just* as any Purple Dragon patrols show up to look in on guests.) The Ship is apt to be noisy and house nonpaying rodent guests, but it is not without its own seedy charm.

The Six Candies



Situated in the angle where the Promenade (on the north), the Hunt Bide (on the east), and Mayhap Lane (to the

²⁴In the event of a siege of Suzail, it's agreed that Purple Dragons will be sent to defend it, so as to provide covering fire for sallies out of Eastgate.

²⁵Court Close runs in front of the Winking Eye tavern and loops around to pass in front of the Court Stables before continuing south to terminate eventually at the docks. Bolliver's Wharf is located due south of the terminus of the Court Close across a short span of water. Shaliber's Ship is normally found here, although Maerun moves it if, for instance, he hears an inspection is about to take place.

²⁶Maerun's trade sign reads "Boats bought, sold, outfitted, rented, and repaired. No job too big, no job too small."



south) meet, the Sixer, as Suzailans call it, can be entered on foot from any of those streets. Its stables, however, stand in the center of the block of shops and residences the Sixer is part of. They are entered off Windever Street, which bounds the block to the west. Once you've got to the place, you will find it a pleasant, large, and bright sleeping house. Its ample interior light is due to its many double-paned, well-caulked windows.

The dining room at the Sixer serves adequate fare, but it seems to be the permanent home of a variety of old men who are always to be seen sitting over game boards in a back corner. If approached properly, one can discover that they're all contacts for the infamous Saszesk.

Saszesk is a stealthy smuggler of both goods and people. Some rumors claim he owns the Sixer and lives in rooms somewhere in its extensive cellars. The cellars certainly do exist—I've seen them. I can report that the ever-present echoing of dripping water would cover a lot of other sounds down there.

The Sixer is a good place, whatever the truth about the smuggler. By the way, the Six Candles has no connection to the older Sixcandles Inn in Hultail—Saszesk seems to have chosen the name to confuse customs inspectors.

The Wailing Wheel



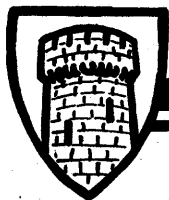
Situated in the southwestern angle where Windever Street and the Promenade

meet and facing the Horngate, the Wheel stands at the other end of the same block fronting the Promenade as the Six Candles. The Wheel is the quietest, least known of Suzail's large inns—and for good reason. It's always cold and dirty, the dining room fare is meager, and the service is almost nonexistent.

Still, prices are low, especially if you take the three-nighter, a deal which yields up a suite of rooms for 5 gp plus 1 sp more per beast stabled and per person (to cover meal costs). And the place is very well built, so you hear little noise from other guests snoring or celebrating in the wee hours. If you want cheap lodgings where you are left alone to sleep in peace, and you don't care about the food, or—gods look down—you *like* greasy stews, bland cheese melted over stale toast, and watery ale, then this may be the place for you. Its size means one can almost always get rooms on the floor and side of the inn one desires unless there's something unusual going on in Suzail, such as a fair, festival, or trade gathering.

The Wheel is owned by the merchant Thentias, a calm, calculating investor and landlord who owns *many* buildings in Suzail and in the Sembian city of Yhaunn. If you want to rent or buy a house, warehouse, or shop in Suzail, a simple word with one of the members of the Wheel's faceless, ever-changing staff²⁷ can bring you a swift meeting with Ramkzorn Sharlin or Alasgar Thurym, the two Suzailan agents of Thentias.

²⁷Thentias must pay poorly. Folk working at the inn don't seem to last more than a season.



Marsember

Marsember, the second city of Cormyr, is older than the capital, Suzail, and far more decadent in just about everyone's opinion. A mist-shrouded, always-damp place of many canals, rotting wharves, and somber stone buildings clinging to islands linked by crumbling bridges, Marsember doesn't welcome visitors either by appearance or attitude.

Long an important fishing and smuggling port, "Misty Marsember" has a sinister, seedy appearance wholly in keeping with the unsavory folk who live here among the city's more honest citizens. Disguised mind flayers, dopplegangers, Zhentarim, Sembian slavers, and Dragon Cultists have been a problem for the authorities for years—as has corruption in local officers of the Crown, a tradition that seems to be continued in the current king's lord of Marsember, Ildool. The people widely distrust him, though local Harpers, war wizards (notably Kyler Blackbone) and Ildool's herald, Bledryn Scorigil, keep a close eye on their local lord. Ildool, in turn, spends most of his time meeting with trade delegations from Sembia and other coastal lands of the Inner Sea.²⁸

No one can prove Ildool is taking covert payments in return for preferential trade treatment, but he does seem to live very well in years when dock taxes sent to the Royal Court in Suzail are so low that one should be able to count the number of ships that docked during the year on two sets of hands. Marsembians bet openly and cynically on how long it'll

take Azoun to get fed up with Ildool and remove him. They also take odds on whether Azoun will remove him openly or whether the king's lord will simply meet with an unfortunate accident. If the latter happens, some folk say, it might be hard to decide which of Ildool's many foes did the dirty deed.

CITIZENRY

According to the current tax rolls, some 46,900 registered citizens dwell in Marsember. Harper and war wizard reports put the real average at an estimated 48,600, rising to a summer high of around 53,200, which is the maximum comfortable capacity of the city's housing accommodations. These figures include some outlying citizens and many folk who try to duck paying taxes by simply not officially living anywhere. The figures fluctuate seasonally because of the many transient seafaring merchants who abide in Marsember and the many professional entertainers and others who serve them but retire to warmer places each winter—as the sailors themselves do. The citizenry is almost entirely human, though a few halflings, and even fewer half-elves, dwarves, and elves can be seen about town.

The citizens are watched over by a garrison of 3,000 Purple Dragons, and an Imperial Navy detachment of 12 major ships and their crews (in excess of 2,200 trained sea warriors) is also based here. An estimated 16 to 20 war wizards live in Marsember.

²⁸Notable among them are the city-states who dwell under the shadow of Thay. And Thay is yet another power Ildool is rumored to be overly friendly with.



Defenders

The vital port of Marsember is more or less protected by Purple Dragons under the command of Ayesunder Truesilver, Warden of the Port. An honest, able man, he seems to devote more attention to keeping the ships and the docks safe and free of crime than policing the back streets and canals of the city.

Whatever the truth about the rot at the top, it's wise for the visitor to remember that Purple Dragon patrols are frequent during the day but almost nonexistent at night, and they are always more numerous the closer one gets to Starwater Keep, the fortress at the eastern end of the city. Purple Dragons can be summoned—in time, one hopes—by simply shrieking. They serve both as police and customs agent escorts, a role in which their diligence and integrity is unquestioned. Purple Dragons pole skiffs along the canals, armed with 20-foot-long lawhooks for grappling vessels, docks, or flotsam, and gaffing those seeking to escape or fight. All local soldiers are good swimmers, and they wear leather armor with easily removable metal helms and breastplates in case they end up in the water. Soldiers are rotated into and out of Marsember every few years to cut down on possible corruption—or at least make it very expensive for a dishonest merchant to keep the police paid off.

The local Imperial Navy detachment is Cormyr's front line of defense against pirates raiding in the Neck. The detachment patrols the coast, guards the Navy dry docks, and trains approximately 240 recruits annually.

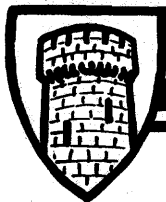
The training is done using four old and leaky galleons. *Ansiber's Wrath* is particularly decrepit. It has sunk three times and been dragged up from the deep by means of chains. On another dozen or more occasions, it has barely limped back into port because every sweating recruit aboard was frantically bailing or pumping while their training officers sailed the old tub.

Most of the regular ships of the line stationed here are small, fast coast-boats, though two large and well-armed war caravels, the *Sea Snake* and *Thomdor's Fist* also call Marsember home. The visitor can easily recognize these two by the long, wicked metal rams low on their bows.

Magecraft

Few mages call Marsember home, or at least, few residents advertise their mastery of magic. That's not surprising, given the actual or reputed prevalence of smugglers, slavers, mind flayers, and similar dangers to mages in the city. One local mage everyone respects is Delthrin the Deadmaster, a reclusive necromancer infamous for animating many undead to defend the city against a pirate raid. His abode is said to be guarded by many undead he created in experiments best not spoken about.

More public and approachable figures—though probably as well guarded as Delthrin in other ways—are the sorceress Filfaeril Stormbillow and the illusionist Vindala Chalanther. Filfaeril Stormbillow is a retired adventurer who makes and sells magical items and potions and has grown very rich doing



so.²⁹ Vindala Chalanther openly offers her services for hire, both as a spell-hurler and as a tutor of would-be mages.

All mages who enter Marsember must register before the next sundown with the king's herald, Bledryn Scoril, or Lord Ildool. The lord just wants to know who's likely to be hurling spells about. He's been known to casually dismiss mages who come to him, especially those who openly declare themselves as war wizards.

Worship

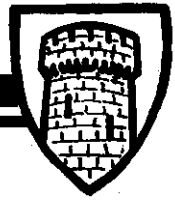
A single temple stands in Marsember: Morningmist Hall, dedicated to Lath-

ander. The sage Orblin of Hlondeth recently described this slim-towered edifice as "a bright light of hope in the dark heart of decadent Marsember" largely because of the energetic work of its leader, High Morninglord Chansobal Dreen. The Chanter, as most locals call him, is a shrewd investor in new ventures who particularly enjoys ceremonially consecrating new ships. A deadly foe of pirates and smugglers, he often sends his faithful out on hired ships to do battle with them.³⁰

The city also holds shrines to Tymora, Umberlee, and (still) Waukeen. The shrine to Waukeen is very small and abandoned as a place worship, but is

²⁹Filfaeril is known to purchase rare or unusual monsters corpses or body parts from adventurers. More about her and the other independent mages of Marsember can be found in Appendix I of this guidebook.

³⁰Chansobal Dreen is a NG hm C12 of Lathander who leads 16 priests and 12 lay temple staff.



maintained by Lord Ildool for use as a moneychanging establishment as a public service.³¹ There are persistent rumors that darker sea cults³² meet in private in watery cellars and undersea caves that are reached by going down dark and dripping secret passages known only to the cultists themselves.

Trade

Marsember is Cormyr's busiest port. Huge tonnages of goods from Sembia and points east are run in at its docks each year amid all the bustle of fishing and shipbuilding. Most of this began when Marsembian merchants scoured Faerûn in search of spices, a once-roaring trade that earned Marsember the name "City of Spices." Such trade has fallen off in recent years as other cities, such as Westgate and Nimpeth, vie for importance in shipping condiments to the Sword Coast lands. The uplands of Cormyr produce plentiful mustard of the finest quality, and Marsember has become the primary port for shipping this edible golden fire to distant Realms.

Surprisingly for such a damp place, Marsember is also a center of cabinetry and wood-carving, thanks to the settlement here, long ago, of several families of skilled carvers who were fleeing strife in the Old Empires. Pieces produced here are distinguished by their curved edges and spiral-coil legs and handles; no Marsembian piece ever has sharp corners.

Marsembian shops also produce perfume. This business probably began as a desperate attempt to offset the stink that hangs thickly over the city. As most citizens want their own water access to trade without paying the docking fees that reimburse the Crown for the costs of constant stone-hauling and canal dredging, the islands on which much of old Marsember stands are crisscrossed by a webwork of narrow, winding canals. These local sewers can only be politely described as "unpleasant." Their stench is incredible during hot, dry summers, and the heat of unseen things rotting in the depths keeps their steaming waters clear of ice even in the coldest winters.

Marsember stands on the west bank of the mouth of the Starwater River. Wise foreign sailors put in at Marsember to avoid Suzail's high docking fees or to let local vessels carry their wares inland up the Starwater through the treacherous Starmouth sandbars. Marsembian docking fees vary by the season but are usually 1 gp per berth. A ship too large for a 90-foot-long dockside berth must pay for two berths or anchor in the basin at a cost of 2 gp and then suffer the delays and costs of being unloaded by shuttle barges.³³

Both the garrison and citizens use small skiffs for transport through the canals and channels. Made of stout wood sealed with fish oil or tar, these low-lying boats are flat-bottomed, 2- to 4-feet wide and 8- to 10-feet long, and have upswept

³¹Since Lord Ildool does not seem normally inclined to philanthropy, citizens have speculated that the lights occasionally seen in the shrine at night mark its use as a secure meeting place for Ildool or his agents when meeting with less-than-savory characters.

³²According to local legend, these include worshipers of Blibdoolpoolp, Sekolah, and other, more obscure faiths that feed living sacrifices to giant lampreys and clams.

³³Suzail's fees follow identical rules but are twice as high.



gunwales so that either end can serve as the bow. A skiff is usually equipped with two long, hook-ended poles, two paddles or oars, and a canvas cover-tarp that doubles as a lateen sail when rigged on the poles. Leeboards (wooden side-rudders) are used when sailing. The waterlogged condition of most skiffs makes them burn slowly despite their flammable waterproofing, but they sink rapidly if holed or swamped. The harbor shuttle barges are larger, better-built craft; aside from their use by the harbor stevedores, shuttle barges are also used by the Navy and merchants who haul things upriver.

Marsember is also a smuggling center, though this practice is not as rampant as it once was. Yarn-spinning barhounds in Marsember tell tales of lost full wine casks rotting under the water, fortunes in royal regalia from war-torn Tethyr hidden somewhere in Marsember for when a king shall arise again, and sunken slave cages discovered crowded with drowned unfortunates when warehouses were torn down. Despite Marsember's unsavory reputation, there aren't any known local thieving organizations. Between them, the war wizards and Harpers root out all actively dishonest groups. The Harpers, who use Marsember as a safe port for the movement of agents and folk they're trying to keep hidden, work hard to keep the city "clean."

The Nobility

The noble families of Cormyr are largely absent from Marsember—or at least,

they keep their heads down when in town. The Thunderswords and Illance houses both have large, palatial homes enclosed in their own fortresslike walls here, but the Thunderswords are said to have purchased theirs—once the seat of the extinct Aurubaen noble house—to win themselves a private dock as an investment. By contrast, the Illance family has deep roots in Marsember and owns many properties through a complicated web of small companies bearing the names of others. It would be the height of folly to link this old, proud noble clan with persistent local rumors of ongoing slaving operations involving their Marsembian-based vessels and warehouses, so I won't.

Most noble families avoid Marsember as if it carried plague, which many Cormyreans fervently believe it does—and not without reason. Many locals are always pale, coughing and spitting often without a known cause beyond the handy but meaningless label of Marsembian marsh fever. Since the Janthrin and Aurubaen families died out (not, I'm told, of marsh fever), the only nobility of any local prominence has been the Scorial family, whose members have served the Crown loyally as factors, wardens, and naval officers.³⁴

Fashion

Folk go about the streets of the city in just about anything they don't mind being ruined by the ever-present damp. Cloaks and crotch-high boots are common sights.

³⁴The current head of the family, Bledryn Scorial is the king's herald of Marsember. He continues his family's service—and perpetuates its local importance—by acting as the registrar of births, deaths, deeds, and tax payments, and the Crown's witness of sentencings and instruments of trade such as contracts, treaties, and promissory notes. Bledryn is a LG hm F4.



Fops try to keep their boots and gloves shiny to give the impression that they need not work and that what they're wearing is fairly new. (In other words, they want to show that they can afford to buy new clothes whenever the fancy takes them.)

The dashing fashions of Suzail are embraced reluctantly in Marsember. Those who admire court fads and things Suzailan too much are derided as "fancy noses" or "Crown-kissers" rather than decent working folk. Of course, many folk *elsewhere* in Cormyr won't agree that "decent" and "Marsembian" can both apply to the same person.

Fairs

Folk in Marsember celebrate the usual seasonal festivals, plus the Breaking and Dragonturtle Day. The Breaking is a wild feast³⁵ held to celebrate the arrival of the first foreign ship into port after the ice breaks up, and the celebration lasts an entire day and night through. The crew of the first ship in is toasted liberally, and the vessel need pay no docking fees all season long. Because of the waived docking fees, competition for the honor of being the Breaking ship means more than receiving a party and this has sometimes brought overly daring ships to grief amid floating ice.

Dragonturtle Day is the anniversary of the slaying of a gigantic dragon turtle whose lair made Starmouth a deadly area when Cormyr was young. Citizens are proud to show visitors what remains of the beast's shell. It covers the ceiling of a high-vaulted antechamber of the Ring's Tower.

A Look Across The City

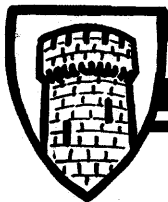
The seaward side of Marsember is a maze of many sandy islets bulwarked against the waves by piles of stone and forests of rotting pilings and linked to the shore and to each other by a network of low stone bridges. In the early days of Marsember, storms and high spring tides often swept away docks, buildings, and sometimes the islands on which they stood! Since the reign of Palaghard II (great-grandfather of Azoun IV), the Crown has paid for the annual dumping of cartloads of quarry rubble from mines near Tyrluk along island shores to guard the sandy soil against the hungry sea.

The mainland area of the city—or backshore, as locals call it—is a tangle of rolling cobbled streets and crazily leaning stone buildings. Both the weaving streets and the tilting structures are symptoms of the desolate bog underlying the whole city.

The Marsember Marsh (for which the city is named) once stretched along the shore for miles, haunted by lizard men and the far more terrifying creatures they fed upon. Then a great war broke out among the lizard men and most were slain. The dismal, almost deserted Starmouth area became the haunt of will-o'-wisps and worse things. Only a few fishermen and ferry folk dared to dwell nearby.

But the founding of a city here was inevitable. The Starwater River is free of rapids as far north as Redhand Pool in Eveningstar, though boats must be small and of shallow draft to reach past Mouth

³⁵*Elminster*: Volo means "excuse to get drunk" here.



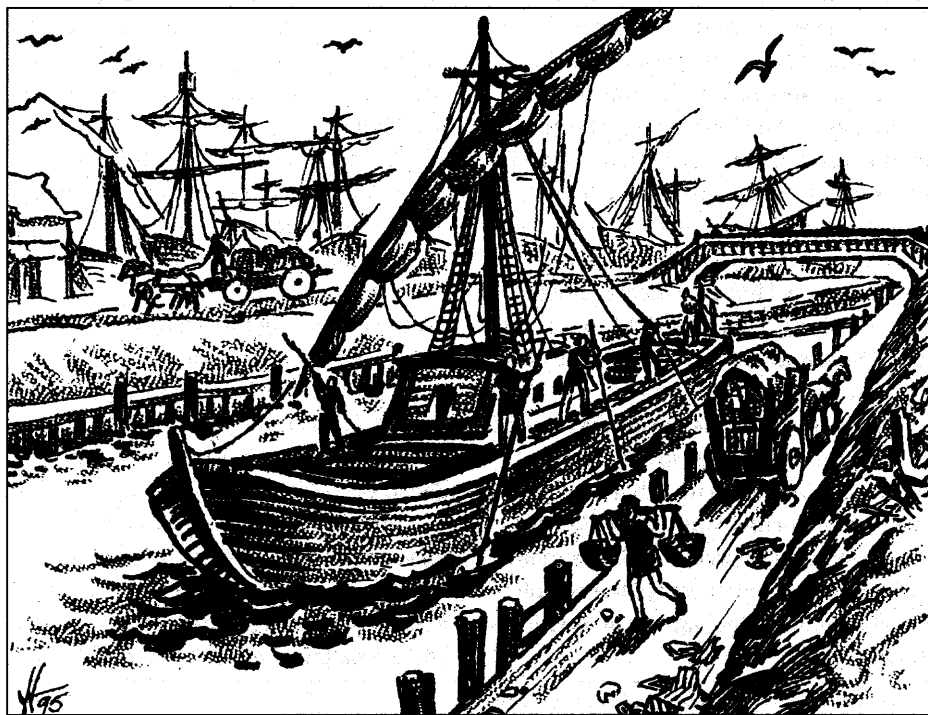
O' Gargoyles. Because of its length and accessibility, the Starwater provides the cheapest transport into the heart of Cormyr. As trade between the Forest Kingdom and older Inner Sea lands grew, seagoing ships unloaded cargo at the Starmouth onto small skiffs or rafts for the trip upriver. The Starwater route in turn brought logs and smelted ore down from the interior.

A ramshackle series of docks and precarious trestle bridges soon arose—and Marsember still has a ramshackle air about it. By royal decree all new buildings must be of stone, reinforced by stucco that must be renewed whenever ordered by local Crown inspectors. The use of cedar or slate on roofs is also required. Older wooden warehouses and boat sheds still stand, how-

ever, many visibly rotting and sagging into the water.

By night, beacons burn bright on the outermost docks and rocks of the city to prevent ships running aground, but the rest of the city is shrouded in darkness. Link lads can be hired to provide light, and their bobbing lanterns can be seen nightly, wending slow ways through the streets. However, the many nightly mysterious splashes and mist-muffled footfalls tell even the most inattentive visitor that most Marsembians active at night prefer the soft shroud of darkness.

This is in keeping with Marsember's sinister reputation. Across Cormyr, children speak of the city as the home of marsh monsters and may even shout such terms at Marsembians they meet. More chillingly, Marsembians tell tales





in their taverns of marsh monsters, too. Old Marsembians speak of will-o'-wisps knocking over bridge lamps in night fogs and posing as the lamps, then moving to lead the unwary into watery bogs.

Those who drown in the Starmouth, they say, return in undeath to seek out friends, lovers, family, and especially foes and debtors. Dripping they come by night to drag the living down to join them. Even hardened adventurers admit that strange creatures lurk about the Starmouth and that there is something fey about the murky canals of Marsember.

Yarn-spinners also whisper of treasure hidden beneath the murky waters. It is certain at least one of Gondegal's gold-laden payboats sank in the Starmouth. Marsembian elders also speak of skiffs full to the gunwales with elven gems that were scuttled in the canals by night to avoid seizure by Zhentarim. They also tell of Sissra, a half-elven princess who died in the city 400 summers ago. Her corpse was laid in a slim riverboat, along with gold, gems, and magic arrayed about her. Set afire, it burned to the waterline while drifting in the Starmouth. Its remnants have never been found, but many believe Sissra's ashes and treasure lie in the all-concealing mud under some old warehouse.

Landmarks

The grandest building in Marsember is undoubtedly the King's Tower. It rises, massive and smooth-sided, from the northwestern corner of a castle on the shore at the western end of the city, looming above its own cobbled terrace

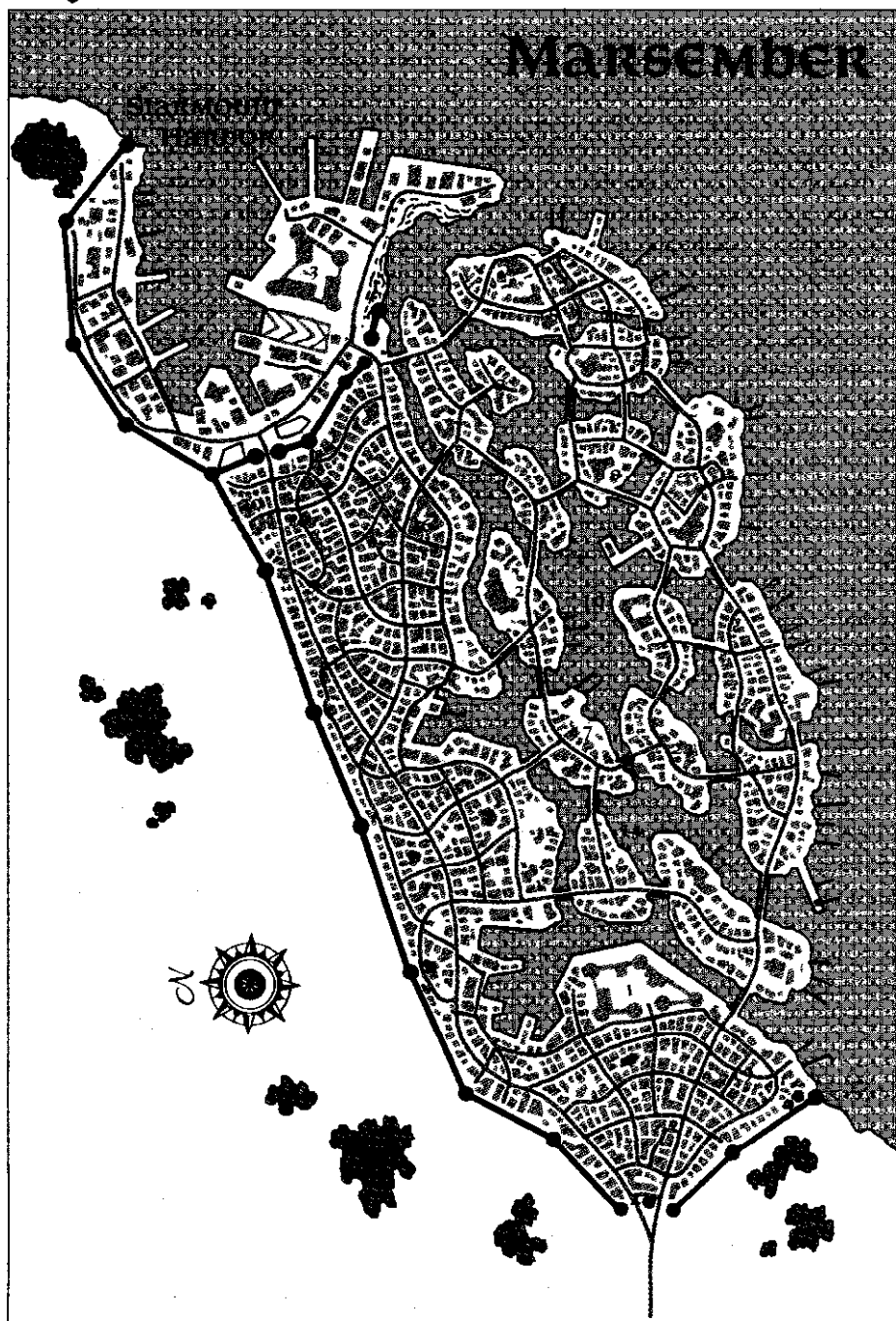
and dock, which form the largest public open space in the city.

Trees in Marsember are few to none, and the streets don't have names—at least, not names anyone seems to use. Visitors must either wander or ask directions. Wandering is an activity best confined to the daylight hours, and Marsembians seem to enjoy making a game of sending foreigners—and Suzailans especially—on wild goose chases through the streets by giving them fanciful and distorted directions.

The islands do have names—several names each, depending on the age and wealth (or rather, haughtiness) of the Marsembian speaking of them. I was able to identify with certainty only two: Sharmran Isle, also known as Fishgut Rock, and Antanmaran's Isle, also known as the Prow due to its shape.

The only other buildings that catch the eye are the rosy walls of the temple of Lathander, Morningmist Hall, on its island in the heart of the city and the frowning ramparts of Starwater Keep, which effectively wall off the naval base from the rest of the city. The walls of Morningmist Hall are kept rosy thanks to continual *faerie fire* radiances.

Many grand private houses owned by nobles or rich merchants hide behind walls all over the city. I was able to discern the ownership of only three, and they're not open for casual viewing. Actually, all of Marsember seems to be like that: locked doors, no signposts, and a reticence about who lives where and does what. Accordingly, my coverage of city establishments is rather meager. Marsembians just didn't want to trot out the glories of their city.





Marsember Map Key

1. The Ring's Tower (abode of Lord Ildool, the herald, and the garrison)
2. Morningmist Hall (temple of Lathander)
3. Starwater Keep (Naval drydock and fortress)
4. The Roaring Griffon (inn and tavern)
5. The Cloven Shield (inn and tavern)
6. The Old Oak (inn and tavern)
7. The Barrelstone Inn
8. The Drowning Flagon (inn)
9. The Net of Pearls (shop)
10. Thundersword villa
11. Illance villa
12. Stormwinds Towers (home of Szwentil)
13. Sharmran Isle (Fishgut Rock)
14. Antanmaran's Isle (The Prow)
15. The Drowned Sailors Society (club)
16. The Masked Merfolk (nightclub)
17. The Wight on a Weredragon (restaurant)
18. The Platter of Plenty (restaurant)
19. The Tankard of Eels (tavern)
20. Shrine to Tymora
21. Moneychanger (former shrine to Waukeen)
22. Shrine to Umberlee

Places of Interest in Marsember Shops

Marsember boasts many wandering peddlers whose goods are available to those who know where to find them (in other words, locals). Most of them drink or snack in the dining rooms of certain inns, and if one doesn't know their routes, these eateries are the best places in which to find them. Several—notably a bald, fat man known as Earbos and a one-eyed man called (creatively enough) One-Eyed Naerdurr—seem to specialize in the sale of whatever cargoes have fallen off recently arrived ships. I'd not dream of openly calling such respectable businessmen fences of stolen property. I'll leave that to other tongues.

Marsembian shopkeepers who keep regular hours and open their shops are fewer. I've noticed that many bakeshops

and hot fish³⁶ stalls just swing open shutters in their streetside walls and strike a gong to signal their wares are for sale—something anyone nearby who has a working nose usually knows already. Almost all such shops have a sideline, from recaning wickerwork chairs to darning torn clothing. This trade goes on through the same window as the food is sold through. Again, this system works well for the locals who know what the shop deals in and not so well for others.

I found only one shop in all of Marsember worth the visitor's time as a sightseeing destination and a useful source of needed goods:

The Net of Pearls

Antiques and Curious Goods



The storefront of the Net of Pearls is not distinctive—indeed it's difficult to tell

³⁶This means cooked—not stolen—seafood.



there's a store at its location from the exterior. The interior, however, is a maze of hanging nets, crumbling figureheads salvaged from the bows of wrecks and lashed to pillars here and there about the shop, battered sea chests, and all manner of exotic goods brought from afar, from blown glass Thayan hookahs to carved odalisques³⁷ from the Old Empires. Not only is this a fascinating place to wander about and peer at things, it's the only place in all Cormyr I know of to buy Chessentan thespians' masks, old Purple Dragon arms and armor, and other items useful to the wayfarer in need of a handy disguise. Here one can also purchase seafaring equipment, from lobster pots to floats to weights—to the coffins so often sunk with weights.

The Net is run by a close-mouthed, sword-scarred man named Tannuth Ormbyr who's said to find and hire adventurers and mercenaries for clients requiring discretion. If you get him to talking about the old days of Marsember, he's a good source of lore. Ask him about more modern doings, and he shuts his mouth like a seashore clam and eyes you coldly. Crown agents are (sigh) everywhere these days, it seems.³⁸

Clubs

Marsember has few clubs whose existences are openly acknowledged. I was able to find only two not concerned with shady dealings: the Drowned Sailors Society and the Masked Merfolk. The

Drowned Sailors Society is a smoky room where old salts get drunk and tell incoherent tales of their voyages, and it is not worth a visit.

The Masked Merfolk



The favorite haunt of ardent Marsembians and visiting sailors and merchants alike, the Merfolk is a place where folk go to find other folk for a night of intimate entertainment. It has a dance floor as crowded and lively as any in Waterdeep or the cities of Amn, and some patrons come here especially to enjoy the company of the three known dopplegangers on staff. The escorts at the Merfolk all pass on information in return for small fees (typically 5 sp per message) and thereby serve as important communication links to most of the shady businesses operating in Marsember. The ability of the dopplegangers to change into the shape of someone else makes arrests by the Purple Dragons unlikely. There's even one tale about a doppleganger who escaped death at the hands of an adventuring band in an upper bedchamber of the Merfolk by emerging in the unclad and irate shape of King Azoun himself!

Nights at the Merfolk are enlivened by regular wine-tastings of rare and exotic vintages brought from all over Faerûn (for 6 gp per glass), contests of acrobatic skill, and performances by minstrels and singers of all sorts. While I was here, I saw a man who juggled knives while eating a

³⁷*Elminster*: Volo means statuettes of jade and ivory here, not living women who've been cut up or mutilated. Sigh. Language, my boy—'tis a delicate thing. Use it with care.

³⁸Tannuth is a CN hm F8. He has extensive legal and shady contacts in the city and in Sembia. He trades names and directions for gold pieces. He can also be hired by the very wealthy to come with a few sword-swinging but discreet friends to rescue (or hide) clients or their wares if they're caught, stolen, imprisoned, or confiscated by rivals or Crown agents in Marsember.



plate of oysters as he walked along a taut cable suspended across the dance floor at shoulder height. One leading local light is Elestra Blaebur, a sultry-voiced bard given to performing in elaborate and daring gowns. She plays and sings at private house parties as well as at the Merfolk.³⁹

Visitors looking for the Merfolk are advised to follow any sailor who's doused himself in cheap scent and put on flashy clothing. Alternatively, seek the fourth building west of the landward gate of Starwater Keep, on the north side of the street that runs out of the gate and through the city. (This street is the only unbroken street to do so.) The door bears a striking relief carving of a masked merman and a masked mermaid embracing each other. It's hard to miss.

Restaurants

For decades, the restaurants of Marsember were the subjects of bitter, derisive jokes up and down the shores of Sembia, the Dragon Coast, and the Dragonreach. They're still pretty bad, though the less pretentious of the hot fish stalls and bakeshops are no worse than those elsewhere, but I found two places one can dine at without too much fear of immediate gut-poisoning.

The Platter of Plenty



The closest thing to a classy restaurant Marsember can boast is the Platter. This barnlike former warehouse's island location makes it an evening gathering place obvious to any visitor. The Platter is always

³⁹Elestra is detailed in Appendix I of this guidebook.



warm, bright, and crowded, from when it opens at dusk until it closes near dawn.

No drink stronger than mintwater is served in the Platter, so drunkards and those wishing to soon become drunkards go elsewhere. Everyone comes here for the food, which can take some time to reach one's table. It may even be a trifle underdone because of the sheer numbers of diners clamoring to be fed. While you wait for your main dish, there are free baskets of rolls, garlic butter, cheese, fried mushrooms, and butter biscuits on each table to eat—if your tablemates haven't already swept their contents into belt pouches for later meals.

The Platter is owned by Bientra Whaelbuckler, a local eccentric of prodigious girth and strength. A meaty giant of a

woman, she sails through the crowds like a large ship cleaving wherry traffic in the harbor. She has been known to eject unruly patrons by picking them up and hurling them bodily the length of a 25-foot table with enough force that they strike the door beyond hard enough to spring it open and deposit them, senseless, in the street outside. She's also been seen unconcernedly carrying barrels of salt pork on her shoulder that usually take three struggling stevedores to lift. Normally jovial of disposition, the fearless Blentra likes her customers to enjoy their food. She's been known to appear from the kitchens with a steaming bucket and a monstrous wooden ladle to dish out free second helpings. Her backslaps are legendary; she's broken men's shoulder blades more than once.⁴⁰

⁴⁰For more about Blentra, see Appendix I of this guidebook.

Blentra's Oysters and Wild Rice in Mushroom Soup



- 2 fists⁴¹ field mushrooms
- 3 fists morels or wood mushrooms
- 1 and 1 half-cup wild rice
- 1 fist of fresh shucked oysters (or
- 2 fists if in the shell)
- 1 quarter-cup flour
- 1 stick of celery
- 6 dice of butter⁴²
- 1 half-cup zzar
- 1 cup stiff cream
- 1 cup salted fish
- 1 large onion
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 pinch pepper
- 1 pinch nutmeg
- 1 handful parsley

Do ye rinse and chop fyne all the mushrooms but 1 fist of wood mushrooms, which ye should hold aside. Then chop the celery and mix with the mushrooms. On a separate board mince the onion while warming a large soup pot in the side.

When the onions be done being chopped, heat the pot in earnest and melt three dice of the butter in it. Stir in the mushrooms, celery, another dice of butter, the onion, and the nutmeg. Stir-and-sizzle⁴³ until the celery be soft, then stir in the flour and keep stirring for six verses of a bawdy song.⁴⁴

Then stir in water or, if ye have it, juice from drained fish or clams⁴⁵ until the pot is half full. Add the seasonings, washing them in with the zzar, cover, and allow to simmer (not boil) while ye crush the salt fish. When the fish is reduced to fragments, stir it in, then simmer for an hour or more.

During this time, stir-and-sizzle the mushrooms ye held aside in the last of the butter. Season with salt and pepper to taste. In another bowl, also whip ye the cream.

When ready to serve the soup, ladle it into serving bowls and cover with a lather of cream. Ladle the 'shroom-juice, melted butter, and all-over the cream, and set each bowl before the customer.

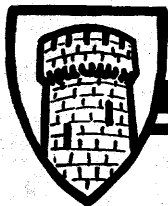
⁴¹A measurement gained by the cook closing her hands into fists and pushing the knuckles together; though both actual fists are involved, both hands together make a single fist, so two fists here means enough mushrooms to occupy just a trifle larger volume than the cooks closed hand four time over.

⁴²Not to be confused with dicing (chopping) something, this measure, much used in Sembian cooking, literally means a cube the size of a cubic (6-sided) die. It is a rough measurement except in Selgaunt, where butter is often sold in long fingers marked for cutting into dice.

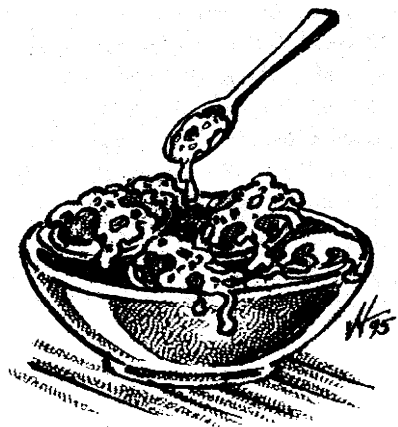
⁴³Elminster: Ye would say "sauté."

⁴⁴Elminster: Ye would say a shade over two minutes.

⁴⁵Such juice is plentiful in the Platter's kitchen.



Blentra's Cider and Vinegar Oyster Sauce



- 1 large greenheart apple⁴⁶
- 2 shallots, or a handful of scallions
- 1 half-cup vinegar (soured red wine)
- 1 half-cup apple cider
- 1 pour of zzar or almond sherry
- 1 spoon of crushed black peppers
- 1 pinch dried mustard

Do ye peel and core the apple, then dice it in a bowl. Then mash in the pepper and mustard. Drizzle the vinegar over it and let stand while ye trim and mince the shallots. Scrape the shallots into the bowl, pour in the rest of the ingredients (zzar last), and mix thoroughly. Chill for an hour, stir once more, and spoon as needed over oysters chilled on the half-shell.

Blentra serves all manner of roasts, pies, and just about anything else that can be served on a platter—notably steamed vegetables doused in a variety of intriguing sauces. I record below one sauce she likes to drown raw oysters in. The amounts given in the sauce recipe make sauce to dress enough oysters to feed either one hungry man or Blentra, who prefers to eat only some of her oysters raw at a meal, sizzling the others in mushroom broth. At the Platter, huge cauldrons of this sauce are prepared by the lowliest of the cooks and kitchen 'prentices.

Many customers also rave about Blentra's oysters and wild rice in mushroom soup. I found it pleasant, especially with wine, and bought a crock to take away with me on the road (2 sp, clay crock

with lid sealed with melted gelatin included). Served cold, the soup was even better than at first dining. I persuaded Blentra to let me publish the recipe in this humble tome, minus one or two ingredients she insisted on keeping secret. I've inserted it on the previous page.

The Wight on a Waterdragon



The name of this establishment comes from its huge but badly done roof sculpture depicting a mummified, clawed man riding the back of a bucking, obviously enraged fanciful creature that looks like a blue dragon with fins instead of legs and a row of fins down the length of its tail.⁴⁷ The sculpture's been erected

⁴⁶Elminster: The greenheart is a large green-skinned cooking apple. Ye would use a Granny Smith, though a greenheart's tarter.

⁴⁷It was carved in Marsember by Jathoom Berl, a crazed-wit who fancied himself a great woodcarver but (cont'd.)



none too tidily, to a ramshackle former fish-packing house with braces and anchor ropes visible all around it. The structure still reeks of its former occupation and like its roof sculpture is also a tangle of crudely nailed support braces—and just as makeshift furniture. The odor of the place isn't improved by the insulation: nets full of old sailors' clothes and salvaged sail scraps that are hung all around the walls.

Still, the place is warm against the damp. It is usually crowded—largely because it serves hearty food and good Purple Dragon and Shadowdark ale. The selection of wines is almost nonexistent, though zzar and a potent whiskeylike homemade distillation known as Harbor Bottom can be had for those willing to risk double the 1 sp per talltankard price of ale. Frankly, Harbor Bottom tastes like one would expect from its name.

The food consists of various roasts, sea pie, pâté whose ingredients it's best not to inquire into too closely, strong cheese brought from all over the Inner Sea, and a selection of sweet, tart, or hot sauces.⁴⁸ The sea pie is diced marine life of all sorts, from skate to squid, all cooked to near-disintegration in a thick beef-based stew with potatoes and then folded into a thick, baconfat-dough pastry shell. Don't ask jokingly here for roast rat; you'll get it.

Everything I ate here tasted good. I recommend the Wight for those looking for a rib-sticking hot meal who don't care about the origins of their food.

Taverns

Marsember was once well endowed with what locals call watering docks, but almost all of them have now become inns as well. The chilly sea damp makes places that serve hot food with their drinks more popular. There seems to be only one "swill only" establishment left.

The Tankard of Eels



Despite its nauseating name, this ramshackle place is warm, fairly clean, and pleasant inside. The name comes from a long-ago bet wherein a half-ogre customer drank—well, you can guess. It's not a drink featured on the menu now, though one can get a respectable selection of ales and wines,⁴⁹ as well as zzar and a few liqueurs.

The Tankard is where folk come to drink and talk, not sing, brawl, or carouse. It's a good place to hear or overhear gossip, news, and tall tales of both the lands around and the seafaring life on the Sea of Fallen Stars. The Tankard provides no entertainment and not much to look at. It's just a room full of people talking like auctioneers in a hurry to be out of town—a listener's paradise.

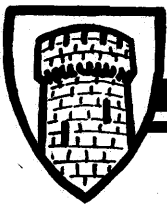
Inns

Thanks to the transformations of its taverns, Marsember is now well supplied with inns, and all of them seemingly take in anyone, from orcs with drawn scimitars to mind flayers leading enthralled

⁴⁷(Continued.) became despondent after the display of the finished piece failed to win him instant accolades from the Court. He had fond dreams of a life of idly overseeing the carving of huge civic sculptures up and down Cormyr as the royal sculptor. He flung himself into the sea during a storm and was never seen again.

⁴⁸Elminster: Used the way ye folk employ barbecue sauce and ketchup or catsup or whatever it's called.

⁴⁹Everything offered by the enterprising Aurora in *Aurora's Whole Realms Catalogue*, in fact.



human captives! None of these inns have long-term rental rates because most shopkeepers with a room to spare and an even greater number of homeowners rent out rooms by the tenday at an average price of 20 gp during the sailing season. (There are a lot of sailor's widows in the city.) Most of these people also rent rooms by the month between the Feast of the Moon (late fall) and Greengrass (early spring) for prices ranging from 20 to 50 gp (40 gp for most).

The Barrelstone Inn



The Barrelstone Inn is located on the first island out along the road that runs from the southerly gate of Starwater Keep

toward the sea; the Drowning Flagon is on the next island out. Situated at a cross-roads near the islands west end, this establishment has the distinction of being clearly the worst accommodation that Marsember currently provides.

The drafty, dirty Barrelstone is always cold. The roof leaks in wet weather; it's constantly dripping here and there—a melancholy sound to try and fall asleep by. Vermin and mosses creep⁵⁰ around the damp bedchambers, and mildew wafts in pungent reeks whenever one of the doors of the back passage, linking all the rooms, swings open. (This back passage is for the use of servants—or guests in sudden need of a hasty exit from the place.) The food doesn't quite taste of mildew, but it too is cold, damp, and generally unappealing.

⁵⁰Yep, the mosses move, too.





The only bright aspect of the Barrelstone is the gnomes who run it. Apparently all brothers or cousins belonging to three or four large families linked by marriage, the 20 or so gnomes who infest the place are always telling jokes, playing pranks (thankfully on each other, never on the guests!), dancing about the halls, and making music—good music. If you want a snatch of an old ballad identified or something played for you, the gnomes of the Barrelstone are as good as any bard at it—well, any irreverent bard. To most travelers, however, the gnomes' musical ability is not enough to make the Barrelstone anything but a last choice of places to stay.

The Cloven Shield



This noisy ramshackle inn and tavern is more suited to drinking parties than sleeping the night through. Apt to be noisy into the wee hours, the Shield is known for armed brawls at late hours, which makes its sign of the war shield split in two very appropriate. The armed fights are due to the Shield's use by mercenaries, adventuring bands, and agents of the manipulative powers that sometimes hire them: the Zhentarim, various Thayan interests, the Cult of the Dragon, and others.

Restful is never a word that could accurately be applied to the Shield, but then the fee for a night's stay is low, and that's all that matters to some. Adventuring bands who want to sleep all together in one room can have one of the larger rooms to the rear for a flat 10 gp per night fee that includes stabling and a simple eveningfeast meal for up to nine!

The Drowning Flagon



Occupying its own nameless (as far as I could learn) island, this former noble's guesthouse has grown over the years into a complex of stables, outbuildings, sleeping cabins, and—after a disastrous fire—separate kitchens and granaries. The main building, thanks to that same fire, now has a soaring central hall and two huge, grandly appointed dance chambers. These chambers are probably the most luxuriously furnished rooms in all Cormyr outside of the Royal Court, the Palace of the Purple Dragon in Suzail, and private nobles' dwellings.

The Flagon was once Marsember's best-kept secret, a place where locals met to gamble or could rent rooms for the private meetings of organizations such as tiny cults, the Aged Evening Escorts Benevolent Trust, and the Sailor's Onshore Investments Agency. The Flagon has rapidly grown in popularity due to parties held in its halls by various wealthy merchants seeking to buy themselves reputations. Now it's an overpriced inn. It costs far too many coins—7 gp per head per night!—to stay in rooms above noise and nightlong pranks, dancing, and carousing.

Yet it's a fun place, and most of it is too newly rebuilt to look worn or grubby yet. The Flagon is *the* place to hold a function in Marsember—an inn on the way up.

The Old Oak



The Oak was once a grand noble's house—just whose has long been forgotten—but is now sadly run down. Rotting paneling sags



away from the stone walls in many places, pillars lean ominously, and molds and mosses creep across a little more of the ornately plastered ceilings each year. The Oak is still, however, possessed of a large wine cellar and a rowdy regular clientele determined to drink it dry every night.

The food is bland and uninspired, but it is safe, I suppose. The rooms are cold and damp but spacious, and they offer good views out over the city. In short, you don't get much of quality, but then you aren't asked to pay much either. Lodgings cost 2 gp per head per night, plus 1 gp if you want a private room and another 1 gp if you have any beasts to be stabled. Food and ale included in the price, though wine is extra.

The Roaring Griffon



This inn was formerly the Drowning Fish, a notorious festhall wherein many

patrons were doused with sleep-drugged wine to awake naked and adrift on a raft out in the choppy waters off the Dragon Coast with all their possessions gone. Although the establishment is now under new management⁵¹ as an inn, rumor hints that not all of the escorts who worked here when it was the Fish are gone. However, the Griffon now strives to be a respectable inn.

Situated in the angle between the two roads that enter Marsember from the west, the Griffon backs onto the Archtower, which stands between the two arched gates. It is easy for any visitor to find, and it is careful to supply clean linen, candle lanterns, and warming pans in every room. Merchants have come to prefer it because of its location and the amenities it provides.

The owner who's made the Griffon such a success is Szwentil, one of the six founding partners of the Six Coffers Market Priakos and by far the richest man in all Marsember. It's said on the streets that he bought the Fish and turned it into the Griffon just so folk who came to the city to do business with him would have a decent place to stay.⁵²

Visitors often go to see his grand house, a fortress that's almost a palace, located elsewhere in the city. This miniature castle is notable in Marsember for the moss garden that rings it. The visitors may only look at the manse from outside its walls, however. Szwentil's never been known to entertain any visitors.

⁵¹The management changed after one duped customer turned out to be an archmage with spells enough to get himself back to land and into a highly dramatic meeting with the proprietors (ah, now the *former* proprietors) of the Fish.

⁵²More about Szwentil can be learned by perusing his entry in Appendix I.



Arabel

The frontier city of Cormyr, Arabel was once an independent hold. Much later it was briefly the capital of the nameless realm ruled by Gondegal the Usurper King. It has always been a bustling waystop on the overland caravan route linking the Moonsea metal mines to the ports of Cormyr and the Sword Coast lands beyond. It's also always been a fortress against the perils of the nearby Stonelands.⁵³

Arabel today is a booming, prosperous center of growth. Both newcomers to the realm and young Cormyreans⁵⁴ are settling in the lands all around it, making Arabel, as the only practical place where they can hire services, ever richer and busier. It's a city of opportunity that is still lacking many of the sophistications of Suzail but not consumers' appetites for them.

Often referred to as the Caravan City or Overland City of Cormyr, Arabel is dominated by land transport. It is a city of trading costers, warehouses, caravan companies, wagonmakers, horse- and bullock-traders, and merchant investors. All of these are ably governed by the ex-adventuress Myrmeen Lhal, the king's lord of Arabel.⁵⁵ A note of warning to visitors: In most circumstances, it's considered an insult to call Myrmeen "lady" rather than "lord."

CITIZENRY

According to the most recent tax rolls, Arabel is home to 16,998 folk in winter, almost all of them humans. When unregistered residents, farmers in the shadows of the city walls, and the garrison are included, the city houses an estimated 23,400 to 24,600 folk. Due to its almost total involvement with overland trade and its location on a major trade route, Arabel has a large seasonal transient merchant population, and its average summertime strength is around 25,600, which is at the limit of the comfortable capacity of Arabel's permanent housing.

Trade makes Arabellans tolerant folk. Only orcs and half-orcs are treated with hostility on sight, and all races save gob-linkin can usually be found within the walls, though only half-elves are commonly seen.

Defenders

The rugged terrain around Arabel has always aided brigands and monsters in mounting ambushes and eluding pursuit, so the city has always been a base for well-armed troops energetically patrolling the Stonelands. Despite grand plans and determined efforts on the part of many Obarskyr kings, the Purple

⁵³The Stonelands are named for their rugged, broken appearance. They rise in a great plateau above the fertile woodlands of Cormyr and are composed of heights of rolling moor land broken by deep, treacherous ravines and studded by rocky tors. The limestone southern verges of the Stonelands give way to bare granite to the north and west, rising into mountains north of High Horn.

⁵⁴In particular, third and fourth children who don't fancy life in the Purple Dragons or being apprenticed in a trade unfamiliar to them are moving into the area. In Cormyr, the eldest child usually works in and eventually takes over the parental business, while the second child seeks a job with the Crown—usually the life of a Purple Dragon. This leaves only priestly roles or completely new fields for later offspring.

⁵⁵Myrmeen is a good-natured but imperious, near-fearless NG hf R12 whose tale is told in *The Night Parade*, by Scott Ciencin (TSR, Inc., 1992).

⁵⁶According to Elminster land reexpressed in game terms) a typical Arabellan Purple Dragon patrol of today is 40 to 60 F3s and F4s commanded by an F6 or F7. These soldiers are supplied with archers and *potions of healing*, and at least two priests and one war wizard accompany them. One to three apprentices usually also accompany the war (*contd.*)



Dragons have never succeeded in exterminating such perils and securing the north for Cormyr as far as the edge of Anauroch. In recent years, orc and mercenary raiding bands sponsored by the Zhentarim have harried travelers around Arabel so as to occupy Cormyrean troops, thus allowing Zhent caravans to pass north of Cormyr unchallenged.

Such raids continue, but with the annexation of Tilverton and recent settlements in the Redspring area, Cormyr's fortunes are on the ascendant. There are persistent rumors that Ring Azoun will soon mount the largest military expedi-

tion into the area yet, in order to clear and take the Stonelands once and for all. In the meantime, caravans ride into and out of Arabel under Purple Dragon escort.

There are actually two detachments of soldiers in Arabel: the Army of the East under the command of Baron Thomdor, the Warden of the Eastern Marches,⁵⁷ and the city's garrison, which obeys the orders of Lord Myrmeen. The two commanders are firm friends and rotate units regularly between the army and the garrison to prevent rivalries and to give everyone battle experience. (I'm told Thomdor, who outranks Myrmeen,

⁵⁶(Continued.) wizards. Everyone is mounted on hill ponies trained not to bolt or take fright, even in the midst of spell battles. The priests, wizards, and commander usually have one or more useful magical items such as *wands of magic missiles* and *wands of paralyzation*.

⁵⁷The stout, bearded Baron Thomdor (LG hm F17, putting what Elminster tells us in game terms), is the king's cousin and a widely respected man. His Purple Dragons affectionately call him "Old Paunch." They are fiercely loyal and will die for him—as all too many of them have had to demonstrate.



is based in Arabel rather than being part of its government.)

Arabel's strong garrison is led by shrewd veteran officers who know the city well and are staunchly loyal to the Crown and to Lord Myrmeen. The watch, the garrison, and the army are all combined in one man, Thomdor's liaison officer Dutharr, who is in effect Arabel's chief of police. Visitors to the city are advised to behave: Oversword Dutharr⁵⁸ is a seasoned veteran who seems able to anticipate trouble—in particular, swindles, instigated riots, and the less lawful plans of adventurers seeking entertainment—and he tolerates no nonsense.

The garrison numbers 1,000, including the palace guard. Thomdor's army has a standing strength of 1,700, of whom around 300 are on road patrols or stationed in outlying wayposts at any one time. These Purple Dragons are aided by the local militia. Its maximum muster is 3,000. Militia members are trained in riding, arms, and formation movement but denied training in archery. The militia's standing strength is 220; active members form the watch. The watch, aided by war wizards and Purple Dragon detachments at the city gates, keeps the peace in the streets.

The vigilance of these soldiers and of the local war wizards helps make Arabel a very safe—if a trifle rough—city with no known thieves' guilds or the like. The war wizards more or less constantly eavesdrop magically to ensure that Arabel isn't

infiltrated by the agents of any hostile power. (The Zhentarim never stop trying.)

Not counting fortresses such as High Horn, Arabel is the one place in Cormyr where unbound weapons are worn openly in public. So many residents and visitors have the right to go armed that the watch doesn't challenge anyone seen with a ready weapon. The city is home to a large number of mercenaries who provide bodyguard service to individuals, valuable items, or caravans. Rates vary widely, from as little as 1 sp through 25 gp per guardian per day, but you definitely get what you pay for. Only the best can charge high rates.

Prominent among these better hireswords are the Red Raven Mercenary Company, currently under contract to the Crown to scour the Stonelands. This task is taking them some time, and they're agreeable to taking properly chartered adventuring bands along on expeditions on an unpaid, keep-what-booty-you-win basis. Led by the charismatic Rayanna Rose,⁵⁹ the Red Ravens are kept under close watch by the war wizards since Zhent control over them could lead to swift death and disaster for the citizens of Arabel. The ranks of these mercenaries no doubt also hold many double agents secretly reporting to the Crown.

Magecraft

Arabel is home to the notable mages Jestra, Myschanta, and Theavos, and to the widely respected mage and sage Mel-

⁵⁸Dutharr is a LG hm F11 who can call on several disguised war wizards among his bodyguard as well as some unspecified magical items of his own. He's thought to have served Azoun for years as a sort of undercover agent, hunting down Zhentarim and other troublemakers whose deeds endangered the peace and stability of Cormyr.

⁵⁹A hero of the battle against the Tuigan invasion, Rayanna is a LN hf F16. Elminster tells us she has hidden depths. "She's more than she appears at first. If ye'd like to know her secrets, ye'd best get to know her as a friend—not expect to learn all by reading a prying guidebook such as this one."



lomir, whom some regard as the foremost *living* authority on the prophecies and divination practices of humankind.⁶⁰ Any number of visiting mages also pass through its gates, and though the questions of the gate guards may be quite probing, Arabel tends to ignore the strict mage registration rules of Marsember and Suzail. Of course, this is because, some say, war wizards are using spells to peer into your mind the moment you step up to the gates to look in.

Suspicious folk—even known Zhen-tarim agents—are usually shadowed rather than challenged. In this way the authorities can learn as much as possible of their shady doings *and* keep Arabel's tolerant reputation intact. This practice causes minimal disruption of trade and the least spell damage to goods and buildings. In a city with more or less constant pack animal traffic, it's all too easy to frighten beasts of burden into stampedes and do real, widespread damage.

Worship

Arabel has only one proper temple, but it's an important one. During the Time of Troubles, Lady Luck herself appeared on its steps and protected the city against the worst of the chaos that swept across Faerûn.

Tymora herself may not be seen on the streets of Arabel any more, but her highest-ranking local cleric is determined that Arabel shall not forget the honor she did it. Damos Lauthyr, High Hand of the Lady, rules the Lady's House as if he were

nearly divinity himself.⁶¹ He has lost several unpleasant confrontations with Thomdor and Myrmeen over just how far his authority extends over those who follow other faiths but happen to dwell in or be visiting Arabel. Damos stopped proclaiming the king's lord guilty of willful blasphemy only after Myrmeen called for a public sign from the goddess in support of her position—and received it.

Nevertheless, Damos has ordered his 24 priests and 336 temple staff members to address him as “baron of Arabel,” a rank he feels Azoun should already have granted him and which he demands of the Crown on a regular basis. He has also increased the fees his temple charges for healing, training, and other services to almost double usual rates. He believes citizenry awed by the memory of Tymora's visitation will pay such fees willingly, and he considers the moneys necessary to accomplish what he sees as simple justice and the furtherance of Tymora's divine will.

Others in the city have remained silent because, they told me, they're hoping the greed that's running away with Damos will cause even the most devout worshipers of Tymora to get disgusted and cast him out. That hasn't happened yet, but Damos has called on clergy of Tymora all over Faerûn to acknowledge his temple and himself as the most sacred and supreme of those who follow Tymora. Their reactions to his demands have been no more cordial thus far than the Arabellan Crown authorities.

⁶⁰Details of all these prominent mages can be found in Appendix I of this guidebook.

⁶¹Damos is a proud, headstrong CG hm C11 who has only become ambitious since the visitation of Most Holy Tymora to the city. He truly believes he must gamble his exalted position on even the slimmest chance of seizing more power because that's what a true believer in the Lady Luck would do.



Doust Sulwood,⁶² the retired Lord of Shadowdale who came to Arabel to further his devotions to Tymora some years ago, is gaining popularity among local worshipers of Tymora as a possible successor to "Lord High and Mighty" Daramos. He has not shown any personal ambitions, but he clearly believes his duty to the goddess is to preach and to pray, not to support a fool who's busily dishonoring both the post of high hand and the good name of Tymora.

The controversy surrounding the temple of Tymora and Daramos is the only major religious matter visitors must know of to avoid putting a foot wrong. Devout travelers are advised that Arabel also holds shrines to Chauntea, Deneir, Helm (worshiped in Arabel as "He Who Watches Over Travelers"), Lliira, Milil, and Tempus.

One of these shrines, the Harvest Altar to Chauntea, has gained many worshipers in the last few years as the lands around Arabel have been settled by farmers. A proper local temple to the Earth-mother will probably soon be founded somewhere near Arabel but outside the city walls. Delegations to the Royal Court in Suzail from temples of Chauntea in Sembia and the Dales are known to have already proposed the construction of a fortified abbey for Arabel, but Vangerdahast is reported to have been reluctant to build a base that brigands could easily seize to menace Arabellan trade and that would then force Cormyr to sacrifice Purple Dragon lives to retake.

Trade

The Caravan City may be ruled by the king's lord and house a large and active body of Purple Dragons. However, it's dominated not by the decrees and activities of the Crown but by locally based trading organizations such as the Dragoneye Dealing Coster, Six Coffers Market Priakos, the Iron Throne, Thousand-heads Trading Coster, and Trueshield Trading Priakos. These far-flung consortiums, some operating all around the Sea of Fallen Stars and most of the way to distant Waterdeep or Amn, are locked in competition with long-established local merchant families: the houses of Baerlear, Bhela, Gelzunduth, Hiloar, Kraliqh, Misrim, Nyaril, and Thond. Thousand-heads is the most powerful coster. The socially prominent Misrim clan and the quiet, almost reclusive house of Thond are the most influential of the families.

Fortunately for visitors and citizens alike, all of these powers are interested in maintaining Arabel as a busy, tolerant, open trading city. If Arabel becomes too dangerous or unfriendly to trade, business will pass to more southerly routes and Arabel will become an impoverished backwater.

Recent setbacks in the power of the Zhentarim coupled with settlement in the vicinity have created a trading boom. Lots of folk are demanding the same goods that folk in Suzail can buy, and right now Arabel is awash in money and bustling with busy merchants. The diligent shopper can call on almost as wide

⁶²A quiet, considerate man who's also a worldly adventurer, Doust Sulwood is a member of the famous Knights of Myth Drannor, as is his wife, Islif Lurelake. Doust is a CG hm C9 of Tymora. Islif, a more capable battlefield commander than many veteran Purple Dragon officers, is a NG hm F9.

Elminster, who furnished this information, says they both have useful magical items they can call on instantly in any violent situation.



a variety of things to buy as a citizen of fabled Waterdeep. Up to half a dozen caravans arrive or depart in a day.

Arabellan merchants sell or barter coal mined in the Gnoll Pass area and increasingly in bell pits north of the city. The coal pits had until recently been abandoned for decades because of monster and brigand dangers. Miners are now usually guarded by hired adventurers or mercenaries.

The merchants also sell horses bred and trained locally, a dark stout Arabellan beer known as bitter black, a ruby red fine wine with a hint of berries in its taste known as Arabellan dry, and cheese. After being ignored for almost a century, all of Arabel's distinctive edible

exports are becoming well known and increasingly popular abroad. The sharp, robust Arabellan cheddar is considered the best such cheese in all Faerûn, and it travels very well.

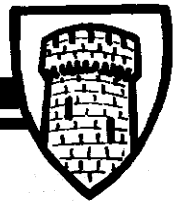
Arabel is also home to and a good hiring place for mercenaries. They tend to be well trained and equipped but expensive. Most bands are composed of a dozen or fewer members, but the Red Ravens can summon 110 swords onto the battlefield.

Landmarks

The fortified city of Arabel isn't visually striking.⁶³ It's surrounded by dusty, aromatic paddocks and stockyards and con-



⁶³A map of Arabel can be found in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* box, the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* hardbound, or the *Cormyr* game accessory.



sists of plain, forbidding walls that make the whole thing look as if it were a giant castle. The walls encircle a crowded array of small shops with rooms above them where folk live. These shops are pressed together along streets that are busy day and night and always seem to lead to rows of unlovely warehouses.

The only striking buildings cluster near the middle of the north wall. Largest and grandest among them is the Citadel, abode of the Army of the East. The Citadel is visible all over the city. No matter how turned around you get, you can't lose your directions if you keep one eye on it. It's a stark working fortress rather than a fancy, slim-towered noble's castle. In front of it, by contrast, is an example of . . . a fancy, slim-towered noble's castle. The elegant, sweeping turrets and conical roofs of the five-towered Arabellan Palace betray its showy design.

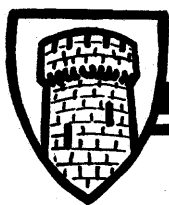
Flanking this oddly matched pair are the grandest nobles' houses. These smaller fancy castles are all walled, defensible houses in addition to being showplaces. Amidst these miniature castles stands the temple of Tymora, the Lady's House. In and around these homes of the mighty stand the only trees to be found in all the city.

The finest noble's home is probably House Misrim, whose walls are made of stone a-glitter with a gleaming white in color. Its varicolored shingles contrast oddly with the battlements of the Citadel beyond, which bristle not with silken pennants as the Misrim crenelations do but with espringales—the largest, newest type of ballistae with the longest range of any ballistae in use. To one who's never seen a grand house, the



other nobles' homes are worth a look, perhaps, but beyond Misrim's white walls there's nothing special about the lot of them.

The city does not offer any other splendor except a lone statue of King Dhalmass Obarskyr, excellently carved of black granite. Rising out of a way-moot in northwestern Arabel, the *Monument of the Warrior King* shows the crowned and fully armored Dhalmass waving a drawn sword, urging the unseen warriors of Cormyr behind him forward against some equally invisible foe. He's in the saddle of his favorite war horse, which is rearing to lash out at the air with its hooves. It is fine piece of statuary, and it is not diminished a whit by the use pigeons have made of its upper surfaces.



Places of Interest in Arabel

Shops

Arabel is crammed with crowded shops full of shouting, jostling people, busily buying the last one of whatever you came in looking for. Someone somewhere in Arabel is probably selling any unusual item you could think of, but there's nary a memorable establishment among them save for:

Elhazir's Exotica

Gifts



This pricey gift shop is all elegant display cases, carpets, and smiling well-dressed sales staff. All of the sales clerks are daughters of the proprietor. They seem to be able to smell thieves, and one of them is a powerful sorceress who always has a *time stop* spell ready to deal with those trying to leave with things they haven't paid for!

Elhazir's has a growing reputation across the Dragonreach for providing rare and unusual treasures such as dragonscale shields and wyvernskull bathtubs. Adventurers provide much of its stock, and rich Sembian merchants make up most of its clientele. Word is also spreading that the urbane, dapper Elhazir sells potions and certain special items, such as enspelled daggers and genuine dragon eggs, to discerning buyers.⁶⁴

Restaurants

Arabel has very few establishments that are just eateries. Instead it has broiler carts that serve hot food as they rumble up and down the streets. Typically, these carts sell hot buns filled with spiced meats or fish, cups of stew, zzar, and bitterroot tea. The carts also sell sugar, salt, dried fish, sausages, and biscuits. The city also has dining rooms in almost all of its numerous inns, and light food is served in festhalls, taverns, and nightclubs. There is one large, barnlike ex-warehouse, though, that serves meals day and night through to Purple Dragons, caravan crews, and weary shopkeepers or wagon loaders: a place aptly called the Hungry Man.

The Hungry Man



One doesn't go to the "Hungry" for atmosphere, genteel treatment, or decor. It's an echoing place of bare trestle tables, rough benches, and self-service lines. Payment is at the door: 2 sp for all you can eat plus 1 cp per tankard for rather watery ale or wine affectionately known as bullock juice.

The provender isn't anything to get excited about, but it's always available, no matter the time or weather. Attentive staff members keep the covered warming crocks full. Here's what you can expect to find:

⁶⁴Elhazir is a CN hm M15 who protects himself with an *earring of spell turning* and an ancient, high-capacity Netherese *ring of spell storing* containing the spells *invisibility*, *fly*, *wall of force*, *repulsion*, and two priestly *heal* magics. He enchants the blades he sells. They are usually *daggers +1* with one additional minor power. Some of these powers include the ability to *feather fall* when the dagger is grasped and ordered, the ability to emit *light* or *faerie fire* by silent will of the person touching them, or the like.

Elhazir's six daughters are all discreet, graceful, and well-dressed. I know only the names of three: Myrele, Chandra, and Illume. Chandra is the sorceress. She's a NG hf M17, though she doesn't betray her profession by her dress. I believe she wears an amulet that shields her mind against magical and possibly psionic prying and influence. Precisely what it is and what form it takes I'm unsure of. She does wear or carry something magical at her girdle, however.



- Sliced roast beef
- Roast mutton
- Spitted fowl⁶⁵
- Milk porridge
- Arabellan cheddar cheese
- Goat's milk cheese
- Hot bread
- Snowbread⁶⁶
- Oatcakes
- Pan-fried turnips
- Boiled carrots, mint, and greens
- Fried sliced potatoes in cheese sauce
- Spiced flour dumplings
- Broth⁶⁷
- Mustard
- Grated horseradish
- Garlic-and-parsley butter
- Brackleberry jam⁶⁸

Large barracks kitchens in castles all over Cormyr (at High Horn, for example) have menus very similar to this, although they add venison and jellied eels to the bill of fare. Eating at the Hungry tends to be rather like watching pigs crowding each other at the feed trough, but it's a good way to see what caravan company workers, low-wage cargo loaders, jobless folk, and mercenaries are in town—and perhaps even hire them on the spot.⁶⁹

Taverns

Arabel boasts many taverns, but aside from the one I cover below almost all are variants of the oh-so-familiar roadhouse. They are not bad but hold no surprises and nothing memorable: just another rowdy taproom with too-salty, too-thin stew, more stale bread and watery ale, and afterward another lumpy straw mattress. I rate most of them at:



The Dancing Dragon



The Dragon is owned by the famous gem merchant Peraphon of the house of Thond, who established it so he could get some measure of the tempers and characters of the adventurers he wanted to do business with.⁷⁰ This place is infamous for its rowdy brawls. Even folk in Selgaunt and Mulmaster have heard of the wild, deadly punch-ups that erupt at the Dragon more or less monthly. Less well known is the Dragon's role as Arabel's hiring fair for adventurers, merce-

⁶⁵This fowl is grouse, quail, pheasant, and other ground birds. Domestic poultry, ducks, and geese are thrown in when hunters' pickings are slim. Hunters who come into Arabel with a brace of birds know they can sell them for 1 sp apiece at the Hungry's kitchen door, and a free meal is thrown into the deal.

⁶⁶Elminster says this is a sweet bread made with lots of molasses and nuts. The "snow" in the name refers to the sugar, flour, and egg-white sauce that is brushed or poured all over the loaves to give them a hard white coating. It is served sliced and cold or sometimes with a hot sweet sauce drizzled over finger loaves or slices from a larger loaf.

⁶⁷This broth is really a thick meat-and-gravy stew made by simmering the bones and meat leavings, straining the mixture from time to time, and thickening with flour. All meat cuttings and blood are simply stirred into this, as are all carcasses too battered to serve, plus frogs, snakes, and other small things not on the menu—rats and mice, for instance.

⁶⁸Brackleberry jam is the Cormyrean name for a jam made from the mixed berries of the woods and wilderness: gooseberries, strawberries, raspberries, currants, and the like. These are leavened with overripe peaches and quinces packed in sugar and brought to Cormyr's ports in ships from Chessenta and other warmer climes.

⁶⁹When important clergy visit the Lady's House for ceremonies of worship, Daramos has been known to send underpriests to the Hungry with orders to hire people for 2 cp (plus 2 sp afterward, if they behave themselves) as pew fodder to make his congregation seem larger and more fervent than it really is.

⁷⁰Details of this influential man appear in Appendix I of this guidebook.



naries, bounty hunters, guides, and the like. It's the reason so many ornery creatures of violence—er, action—gather at the Dragon in the first place.

People who'd like to hire a bodyguard or an adventuring band but who don't fancy a fist in the face or being ridiculed by braggarts or drunks trying to make a name for themselves can sneak in a back entrance and observe the goings-on from the safety of a dimly lit balcony. To keep the fighters from commandeering the tables up there so they can more easily hurl abuse, tankards, or hand cross-bow quarrels down on rivals below, drinks on the balcony cost double.⁷¹

Open offers of employment are posted on chalkboards at the doors and on the

balcony pillars or cried aloud by runners on staff at the Dragon. Such a pronouncement usually costs 1 gp since the staff member usually has to endure a volley of hurled tankards, spittle, food fragments, and the like. Negotiations begin by someone communicating his or her willingness to be hired to a runner. The runner tells the prospective hiree to put or keep herself or himself in view of the balcony and the goes up a staff-only stair to the balcony to tell the prospective hirer. The staff member, who gets a 1 gp fee if a deal is clinched, runs up and down the stairs carrying messages back and forth until the deal is done. The Dragon's bouncers step in as witnesses to any deal.⁷²

Those too drunk to fight are ignored

⁷¹In other words, balcony prices are 6 cp per tankard for beer and 8 cp per tallglass of wine as opposed to 3 and 4 cp.

⁷²These brutal warriors, known to all as "the lovelies," are actually a group of hired ogre magi employing their (*cont'd*)



beyond being dumped out of their chairs by others wanting to sit in them; they decorate the floor. All tankards and tall-glasses in the Dragon are of fired clay, so they shatter if used as weapons. There's little more to say about the place, except that it's a great place to hear tall tales of derring-do and treasure taking as all the swaggering "fighting brothers" drink more and *more* and boast of their exploits, trying to outdo each other. One young sorceress said she and some fellow fancy-filled apprentice sorceresses go to the Dragon regularly of evenings, once they've mastered *invisibility* spells, to watch "gorgeous men swaggering."

Rooming Houses

Visitors planning a long stay in Arabel can save many coins by taking rooms in one of the city's many rooming houses instead of an inn.

Shassra's



One of the best boarding houses is Shassra's. It is a clean, simply furnished but welcoming house. Shassra gladly houses adventurers, minstrels, and other less-than-respectable folk. She offers private rooms for 4 cp per night or shared rooms for 2 cp. Baths are 1 sp each, and no other amenities are provided with one's stay beyond a ewer of drinking water, a basin of wash water, and a chamberpot.

Inns

Arabel has far too many inns to list here. One can hardly turn a corner in the Caravan City without seeing an inn sign-board or three. What with all the competition and the city's traditional dependence on travelers, none of these wayhouses are particularly bad, so I've noted here only the most interesting.

Guests of the Crown are usually quartered in the Dragon's Rest guesthouse, not the Arabellan Palace, because of the *ring wards*⁷³ laid on certain floors of the royal residence. It's embarrassing to have wandering guests hurt by guardian magics.

The Elfskull Inn



This inn is named for the apparition of a floating, glowing elven skull seen in its entry foyer from time to time. It always appears during the hours of darkness but does not follow any discernible pattern or frequency in its appearances. The skull is of unknown origin, or rather is the center of so many competing tall tales that the truth is forever obscured.

Longtime Arabellan lore insists the skull marks the entry to a refuge created by the fabled Sword Heralds.⁷⁴ All accounts agree it was the safehold of a noble family, but just which now-vanished clan is in dispute. The names Dragonarl and Narboot seem most pop-

⁷²(Continued.) *polymorphing* powers to make themselves seem more human. They've been known to tear really defiant rowdies limb from limb, and they have orders to stop all fires and other activities that threaten the survival of the Dragon itself. They are at least a dozen in number, but it's hard to tell their exact numbers since they often use their magic to alter their appearances to avoid harassment from folk they've disciplined (who are trying to get even). Many Harpers suspect this clan of monsters of being behind swindles, shady deals, and even slaving in Arabel. They keep the lovelies under observation. The lovelies are known to make frequent trips to the Stonelands on their days off.

⁷³See Appendix III of this guidebook.

⁷⁴See Appendix II of this guidebook.



ular. The tales all agree that the everyday trigger item needed to open the refuge is an acorn, that two helmed horrors guard the chamber one first reaches when intruding into the it, and that these animated suits of armor guard substantial riches.

The inn itself is superb. Minor magic keeps the richly paneled rooms warm in winter and cool in summer. These enchantments were set in place by anonymous mages hired by the owner. Local rumor believes the mages were war wizards looking to prepare decent accommodations for themselves in the city.

The owner and only permanent resident of the Elfskull is the sage Asheyron the Learned. He maintains offices on the ground floor, but he leaves the running of the inn to a highly capable staff led by two large, earthy, and capable siblings known all over Arabel as the Shrewd Sisters. Orlyra and Mristeezra are keen judges of character who usually anticipate what their guests will do and act with embarrassing effectiveness to foil shady dealings or attempted trysts.⁷⁵

Falcon's Rest



The Falcon is everything the Pride of Arabel should be: a quiet, cozy, luxuriously appointed inn where judicious shielding spells have been used to hush noise and quell drafts. The staff is discreet, quick, and considerate of guests' needs. A weary traveler often receives a warm cloak, a mug of broth, and a hot footbath

without even asking for them and before registering for a room!

Regular guests are greeted by name, and the staff members remember personal preferences and needs, anticipating when a hot drink or fresh wash water is wanted. Patrons who want to be bathed by servants are; those who prefer privacy are left alone. The call gongs stationed in every room here really mean something. Striking one brings a staff member promptly—usually within three breaths.

The lobby of the Falcon's Rest is dominated by a stone pedestal topped by a round stone ball. Atop it perches a glaring falcon, a masterpiece of taxidermy. In the rest of the decor, stuffed and mounted monsters abound, from rearing griffons to couatl kept aloft by magical means.

This inn is a must-see for folk who want to know firsthand what some of the more deadly and unusual beasts of Faerûn look like—or bits of them at least. The stuffed chimera in the second floor hall has ornate brass lamps where its heads should be. (No doubt the heads were destroyed by whatever frantic adventurers slew the beast.) The odd-looking coat and cloak rack in the lobby consists of the tail of a manscorpion (all poison removed) mounted horizontally between two ankheg heads that have been set so that they appear to be emerging out of the wall.

This plethora of beastly remains is due to the ownership of the inn. It belongs to the kindly, scholarly Elmdaerle, known as the Herb Man to most Cormyreans. Probably Cormyr's foremost expert on

⁷⁵Don't ask. Details of Asheyron can be found in Appendix I.



local flora and fauna, Elmdaerle is the guildmaster of the Guild of Naturalists, an organization he founded. He won't be found at the inn, however, unless he's come with a team of guild members to install a new monster decoration.⁷⁶

All things considered, the Falcon's Rest is an excellent house, worthy of comparison with fine inns the world over.

The Murdered Manticore



The Manticore is a good place to go if you want to hear salacious gossip or participate in dealings less than honest or forthright. It is frequented by forgers, "arrangers," procurers, and other folk who dabble in or plunge head-over-heels into the shadier aspects of business.

That doesn't make it a bad place to stay. Such folk come here because the rates are low and the privacy high. The privacy is so high, in fact, because the Manticore is all tapestries and heavy closed doors and hanging silence, with nary a staff member to break it by his or her arrival, even if you ring the call gong in your room *repeatedly*.

The Manticore is a good place to be alone and at peace. Its rating would be higher if any food could be had. Drink is plentiful and is sold across the front desk only by the hand keg or wineskin. Earthen cups not worth stealing are supplied in every room, as is a stout bar that can close each door from within. But this only keeps out those who don't know about the secret servants' passages connecting with every room.

The Nine Fires



This establishment is a tranquil backwater in the bustle of Arabel. It is real value—a hidden treasure, one might say. Richly decorated and kept warm in winter by the large hearths for which it is named, the Niner boasts warm meals delivered to most rooms from the kitchens via dumbwaiter. Its namesake hearths are located at either end of its gigantic common room and at the ends of the halls on all floors above. They are tended throughout the night by the attentive staff. The Niner also staffs a resident firewatcher wizard armed with a *decanter of endless water*, a *wand of frost*, and appropriate spells to douse any blaze for the safety of its guests.

Most wondrous of all, the Niner sports a collection of well-used, battered books that are available to all guests. These are stirring but fanciful sagas of heroic swordplay and spellhurlings of the sort penned in Chessenta and hawked throughout Faerûn by the thousands. (The reader may well be familiar with *The Nymph Says No* or *The Moonlight Morningstar Murders*.) None of these books are useful as sources of lore, nor are they particularly valuable. Guests are warned that the resident mage can readily trace all of them by magical means. Those that wander *are* hunted down and recovered.

The Niner is owned by the famous local adventurer and investor Thurbrand

⁷⁶Elmdaerle is a NG hm M2; Sage fields: zoology, botany. He loves to talk about the plants and animals of the wilderness of the Forest Kingdom, and he really knows his stuff. He can quickly and accurately prescribe (and sometimes even provide) herbal antidotes for sickness and even poison.



of the Stonelands.⁷⁷ He started it because he couldn't find a place to stay that was to his liking when he first made Arabel the base for his life's quest. His lifelong quest is to scour the Stonelands of every monster and lay bare all its riches and secrets.

Though Thurbrand has one publicly recognized house of his own in Arabel (and several others, whisper some folk, used to house various mistresses or shady visiting business associates), he still maintains a suite at the Niner for himself. Of late, the normally bluff and jovial Thurbrand has grown moody and begun acting strange—dabbling in weird rituals late at night, for example, and eating live toads. Some folk say his mind must have fallen under the sway of some evil mage or other powerful being. He's been heard to mutter repeatedly: "Those eyes! The phaerimm see all!"

The Pride of Arabel



This is Arabel's haughtiest inn. It is a grand house of fluted columns holding up cavernous ceilings, with sculpted plaster scenes on every wall and ceiling, many large mirrors—and a snotty liveried staff whose members seem to spend hours preening before those mirrors. One of the mirrors is rumored to be a *gate* into a refuge created by the Sword Heralds,⁷⁸ though no one seems to know how to activate it and the staff refuses to identify it.

The staff's service is slow as winter honey, and the rooms are equipped with

grand, heavily gilded canopied beds whose curtains are very necessary. There's no heat in the upper floors, and in winter the rooms grow positively icy. You may even have to take your ewer of wash water downstairs to a fire to thaw it for use.

This chill allows you to keep food in your room without any risk of spoilage unless the viands can't bear freezing. That's a good thing, too. If you're hungry, food is a long time coming. Everything is cooked from scratch especially for the guest who orders it, so you have to wait most of a day for stuffed fowl or roasts!

Aside from these failings, the Pride is a splendid place to see and to be seen in since it occupies what used to be a noble's manor house. Many merchants take rooms here just to receive clients in or to meet with each other to hammer out trade deals in luxurious comfort. Drink service is both swift and deft, and the selection reveals a splendid cellar. I was unable to inspect it personally, though, due to a mimic that guards the entrance a trifle too diligently

Don't miss the spectacular falling stair at the west end of the inn. It's a delicately carved corkscrew staircase that hangs magically supported in the air and rotates slowly under the pressures of the feet of those using it. It hasn't fallen yet; the name comes from the fact that those not used to it feel like they're going to fall at any moment.

A stay at the Pride is not good value for the money. A single traveler can expect to

⁷⁷From what Elminster tells us, Thurbrand is a CN hm F8 of some 40-odd winters who found some fabulous treasures in Netherese ruins deep in the Stonelands early in his career. He has used much of this wealth to make himself an important landholder in the east reaches of Cormyr. Elminster couldn't shed any light on what's befallen Thurbrand other than to comment that he's obviously met with the phaerimm (detailed in FR13 *Anauroch* and *The Ruins of Myth Drannor* boxed set).

⁷⁸For what's known about the Sword Heralds and their refuges, see Appendix II of this guidebook.



pay around 17 gp per day, depending on his or her stabling and consumption habits. As the minstrel Glindlar of Westgate once described it, the Pride of Arabel is "for those with money to throw who want to make a show."

The Red Stirge



The Red Stirge is the best place in Arabel for the budget-minded traveler. As shelter, it's no more than adequate. There is nothing to drink but weak broth or mint-water and no food to be had at all, but at least the rooms are clean. The inn is usually crowded with down-on-their-luck laborers and merchants, hireswords looking for work or someone they can strike down easily and rob, and undercover agents of the Crown looking for outlaws, Zhents, other hostile agents, and adventurers who are troublemakers.

The inn's name comes from a tattered banner hung over the bar, the proud standard of a now-extinct mercenary company which once dwelt in this crumbling stone manor house, before it became an inn. It's said that the Red Stirge Company perished at the hands of overzealous apprentice war wizards after its members stumbled onto a way into a secret Crown armory somewhere beneath their house. This was a fully warded armory maintained by the war wizards and crammed with *war wizard cloaks*, *battlestar bracers*, armor, weaponry and enchanted brass hands that would unclench when touched by someone who spoke the correct password to allow the *commander's rings* they wore to be taken.⁷⁹

The link between the armory and the inn cellars has since been blocked. The present-day proprietors, a large family of stout and placid humans by the name of Belargrund, are understandably reluctant to let any guests poke around underground.

The Weary Knight



This establishment is the closest thing to an average roadhouse inn that I've written about in this city's entry. It has good stables, straw mattresses that smell like they're made from used stable straw, smoky kitchens, and cheery greetings. I include it here for two reasons.



⁷⁹Details of these magical items and of full wards appear in Appendix III of this guidebook.



First, its name comes from an unopened, ancient knight's tomb salvaged from a church that burned down centuries ago. This stone coffin's lid is carved in the shape of a sprawled knight in armor, one hand on his breast and the other dangling down the side of the tomb as if he had just gone to sleep. The tomb is sealed with lead, and visitors are expected to leave it alone despite local legends that say the corpse within is encased in a suit of armor made entirely of gold.

Second, the proprietress of the Knight, Alanaerle, loves romantic tales and music. This fat, jolly woman, who is so ugly that her face scares children, gives half-price lodgings to minstrels and others who spin tales of courtly love, recite romances with happy end-

ings, or sing love ballads. As a result, a steady stream of wandering minstrels come here. It's a rare night that you can't hear lively tales or tearful songs in the large, low-ceilinged common room.

If such moanings are not to your taste, the parlor at the other end of the ground floor is by tradition kept for those who want to eat, drink, or smoke to the accompaniment of no more noise than talking. Suit yourself.

The Wild Goose



This inn, usually missed by casual travelers, seems shabby and almost derelict from the outside. It's run by a kindly old man named Shult and his three daughters—robust, jolly, bustling and unstop-



pable whirlwinds of ceaseless energy who run endlessly about the place like charging boars, tidying and seeing to the needs of patrons. Standing in the shadow of the east wall, the Wild Goose is forgotten by most and shunned by Arabellans. One can usually find rooms here even when all other accommodations in the city are full. Shult has even been known to let folk sleep in choice corners of his attics and cellars—for slightly reduced rates, of course.

The rates charged at the Goose are a stiff 7 gp per head per night (plus 1 gp per beast stabled and 1 gp per meal), but Shult promises he can get almost any sort of item that'll fit along the passages delivered to a patron's room that isn't immediately dangerous to other patrons (such as a hungry lion might be).⁸⁰ Delivery is free. The patron merely has to purchase the item for whatever price the vendors Shult can contact are charging—and the selection of available goods is truly staggering. Adventurers have been known to sit in their rooms waiting for crutches fashioned to conceal swords whose silver blades have been dipped in particular exotic substances, or for beast

cages of particular dimensions that bear locks made to fit a key that the adventurers have provided.

Shult gets such items through his arrangements with Mitchifer, proprietor of the World Serpent Inn, which shares a dimensional doorway with the actual door of the Goose. Tales of the Serpent's dangers and of the weird creatures that sometimes creep out of it and into the city are what make Arabellans shun the Goose and what bring most adventurers here in the first place. Shult knows how to get into the World Serpent and sells the information on how to do so for 2 gp if asked about it.

Adventurers can, of course, read this information here instead. Those who aren't adventurers are advised not to try the process and instead to stay well away from the Serpent.

The World Serpent Inn is a house fully as expensive as the Goose and with ready access to as wide a variety of goods and services. It is said to exist in a demiplane of its own and to open via its many ever-shifting doors into myriad worlds. What I saw on my visit leads me to believe this may well be true.⁸¹

⁸⁰Shult can arrange to procure on any item in *Aurora's Whole Realms Catalogue*, any known meal or drinkable, and any known monster or being that be induced, coerced, or caged into transport. This specifically includes items only found in a particular place on a particular world, such as the large green plovers' eggs eaten as a delicacy in the Flanaess in Oerth or the omelets garnished with gold dust eaten by certain decadent folk in Shou Lung. These items come, of course, through the inn's dimensional connections.

⁸¹*Elminster*: Of course it's true, ye dolt. The doors are indeed portals that allow one to step directly from the inn to or from various planes. They allow dimensional travelers to avoid those violence-loving idiots of Sigil. The World Serpent was crafted long ago by the archmage Alaurum of Toril, his friend Ilyndeale of the Arcane, and the illithid High One, Sharth. Its usefulness as a little-known back door quickly convinced certain divine powers that it had best be controlled, so one of them who enjoyed constant congress with new and interesting beings took the name and appearance of Mitchifer and assumed control of the inn, decreeing it open to all.

By unspoken agreement, folk tend to set aside disagreements when they're in the Serpent. The powers Mitchifer can hurl at them may have something to do with that. He's not the only deity to be met in the common room of the Serpent, either. Many powers come here to relax, so good behavior on the part of visitors is highly advisable.

Most mages of power, when young and foolish, want to travel the planes and see what's to be seen. I suspect some of them take the adventurers' view of the planes as a sort of endless array of riches and toys to be seized and plundered at will so as to gain wealth and power back home. Most of them eventually perish in their forays or grow out of their hunger for planar travel; they grow up, some would say. But by all means see for thyselfes. . . .





The Serpent is entered by passing **under the signboard of the Goose to stand** right in front of its door. Instead of touching the door, knock on an imaginary door in the air and call on any divine being by name. The only visible change that occurs thereafter is that the signboard changes from that of the Goose to the words "The World Serpent Inn" within a ring consisting of a mottled green serpent eating its own tail. For this to occur, the invocation must include a proper name of what sages call a power or demipower and the words "I" and "enter"; no equivalents will do. For example, say, "By the honor of Azuth, I will enter," or "In the name of Set, I enter."

At this time, the invoker and beings with him or her are actually in a dimensional pocket. They can't see or be seen by folk entering or leaving the Wild Goose by its front door. A war wizard who was quite suspicious of my reasons for asking explained the known details of this magical effect. He admitted it isn't fully understood by the authorities—by which he no doubt means the war wizards—but that it's definitely not the work of the fabled Sword Heralds.

Opening the door of the Serpent takes you into a dark, carpeted passage that seems full of eerie blue smoke or mist. Along its walls are many large, identical wooden doors. Those who look about keenly may notice that some doors appear or disappear or seem to drift along the walls from time to time in an endless, silent shuffle.

The passage opens into the common room of the Serpent, a large space whose distant walls are always lost in the mists. Light comes from fluted pillars here and

there and from a large shaft of light in what is *probably* the center of the room. In the glow of that large shaft of light sits the ring-shaped bar. It is in turn surrounded by tables of drinkers—all manner of beings, from grell to neogi to mind flayers to beholders and worse!

Within the bar stands Mitchifer, master of the Serpent, who greets all visitors as if they're long-lost friends. He's a fat man with rosy cheeks, a long white beard, and a great booming laugh. I felt like laughing the moment he spoke to me, and I noticed that many beings he spoke with did just that. He seems to have every sort of drink imaginable, and he whisks them to outlying tables by means of a small army of scurrying gnomes.

One of these efficient little servants takes you to a room if you express a desire to sleep at the Serpent. Such escorts warn you, though, that all stays must be of no more than a tenday since "space is so short." Those who stay longer (I asked) find themselves left behind on a random plane—possibly without companions or belongings—as the Serpent melts away around them.

I recommend the Serpent for adventurers only. Many guests have begun unintended quests and forays of incredible peril there.⁸²

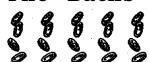
Festhalls

Arabel has its share of places where those with coins to spare can get better acquainted with other intelligent beings, but most Arabellan festhalls seem, well, a little *frantic* in tone and crude in decor. The only exceptions I found in my diligent researches were:

⁸²As described in TSR's anthology module OP1 *Tales of the Outer Planes*.



The Baths



This lushly furnished bath house, wrestling gym, and beauty parlor is notorious among Arabellans of all occupations and merchants from Iriaebor to Tantras for the scandalous goings-on that take place within its walls. It's one of the few places in this busy city of trade, trade, trade and work, work, work where one can relax and indulge oneself in unhurried comfort.

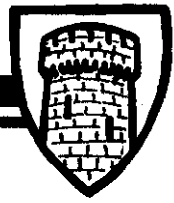
Many fires keep the Baths warm, and the carpeted, tapestry-hung rooms are decorated in sensuous splendor. Exotic plants and ferns jostle for space along the marble walls. Anyone willing to pay the rather stiff 7 gp entrance fee can bathe

here; a private tub is an additional 4 gp.

For 2 gp on top of that an attendant scrubs and perfumes you, and for 3 gp more your clothes are washed while you're in the tub. (Repairs are an additional 2 gp.) Use of the exercise facilities is free, though weapon-play is banned. I saw several groups playfully wrestling in the hot mud tubs.

The spicy reputation of the Baths comes from the more amorous activities I saw taking place. Though the Baths aren't officially a festhall, there are no rules against guests enjoying each other's company or even befriending the bathing staff. Arabel is full of tales about riotous games involving adventuring bands or Purple Dragons on furlough, large numbers of guests, and games of blindfolded tug-o'-war or strike the dragon with the sponge.⁸³

⁸³Elminster says this is almost identical to our game of pin the tail on the donkey.



Occasionally such frolics spill out onto the streets and startled Arabellans are treated to the sight of shouting steaming unclad people scampering down the streets trying to catch each other. Sometimes the participants are not quite naked. Masks—particularly tentacled mauve mind flayer head masks, for some strange reason—and pink rubber dragon costumes are favorite frolicware at the Baths. Folk lacking their own fun wear can rent appropriate attire when they arrive. More than one criminal in Arabel's past has hit upon the rather absurd idea of wearing one of the more concealing masks furnished by the Baths while committing dastardly deeds such as stealing the jewelry of noble ladies from their bedchambers by moonlight.

Drink flows plentifully at the Baths, though there's no food to be had except occasional sugar tarts brought by generous patrons. The Baths serves wine, zzar, sherries, and liqueurs. You can even bathe in tubfuls of certain drinks if you have coins enough to pay for the filling.

The staff at the Baths includes skilled masseurs (and masseuses) and hair-dressers, one or two acrobatic dancers who've mastered some startling contortions, and several naturally friendly folk who've become very skilled at just chatting and setting people not used to bathing in public at ease. I recommend that travelers who want to quickly catch up on Arabellan gossip, find out where they can buy certain items, or discover where so-and-so lives ask for a rotund jolly man by the name of Maundygre. He loves to tell visitors such things as he soaps their backs.

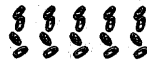
Some highly skilled escorts also work at the Baths. The half-elven beauty Shalara comes immediately to mind. She

keeps her extremely long nails sharp, though. I bled quite a bit into my tub, quite spoiling the sherry it was full of!

Some people definitely come to the Baths hoping to meet a future paramour. Others come only to relax in a hot tub, alone or with friends. One I met goes just so she can eat very messy foods that she loves involving tomato sauces and melted cheeses without getting her expensive and stylish clothes soiled. She slips into a private tub and eats them while unclad so she can wash off spills unconcernedly.

Folk who want to discuss business, hot gossip, or shady dealings are warned that the prevalence of marble walls and water in most rooms causes some curious echoes. Plans may well be overheard in an adjacent room!

Dulbiir's



This unusual place rents out finery and other costumes—from slave-rags to the tourney armor of the most decadent dukes of long-ago Tethyr—for the use of patrons and the escorts provided by Urtos Dulbiir to accompany patrons. In these leased outfits, they cavort together in the grand ballroom, the “dungeon” or the “garden,” or, before all the gods, in the street outside!

Some patrons of Dulbiir's come primarily or even exclusively for the playacting rather than to enjoy the usual services provided by an escort. Mild-mannered merchants can pretend they're scimitar-waving pirates, meek shopwives can don leather and pretend they're priestesses of Loviatar, and so on. Some of it's quite amusing to watch, and



you can even pay 5 gp per hour (or part thereof) plus the cost of drinks to sit in a magically shadow-screened booth and watch other folk having fun in their costumes.⁸⁴ The others supposedly aren't aware of your scrutiny. If you should need to leave early, no money's refunded, and there's a two-breath warning chime before time runs out just before the end of each hour.

The Lavender Lion



This well-known festhall has a rowdy floor (the Downstairs, or street level)

where folk can dance to bawdy tunes or watch others bowers dancing or pursuing other physical activities. It also has a floor of private rooms, the Velvet Floor, for folk who prefer to be more discreet. This dimly lit floor has curtains across its passages so patrons can't see very far when walking about. It is also equipped with a secret passage and stair to allow prominent folk to enter and leave unseen. There are rumors that several elderly nobles and senior Purple Dragon officers are regular patrons here.

In recent years, the Lion has opened a new venue in its cellars: the very popular Spiderweb Room. A captive giant spider

⁸⁴Shadow-screenings are magical barriers that can be seen through clearly from one direction, but which from other side appear to be shifting, always-impenetrable gloom—even if someone standing behind one is accompanied by bright lights. Dulbiir wouldn't tell me which mage cast the shadow-screenings, but I suspect it was one of the local notables and that certain bower balconies I saw in some of the noble houses bore similar treatments. Such barriers do nothing to block the passage of sound.



spins webs in a large, high-ceilinged chamber and adventuresome couples can chase each other around on them. The spider is caged out of sight when the Lion is open for trade, though a small but vocal group of mainly male patrons has demanded—so far without success—the thrill of sharing the web with its unconfined arachnid maker. Ugh.

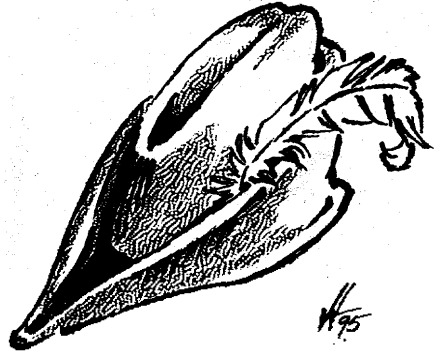
The Lion charges only for drinks in the Downstairs, and patrons must negotiate separate fees with the escorts. Rooms on the Velvet Floor are an extra 6 gp per hour. Chiming water clocks keep time in every room, and there's a ready desk of discreet staff members armed with *wands of paralyzation* who keep track of time and respond to distress bells rung by escorts. (These distress bells are buttons concealed in bedsteads and elsewhere around the rooms.)

The Spiderweb Room is 16 gp per hour and is cleared when time runs out. Unlike the rooms upstairs, those willing to pay more can't stay for as long as they want. Despite these strict time limits, use of the Web is sometimes booked as much as a tenday ahead.

The Moonlit Touch



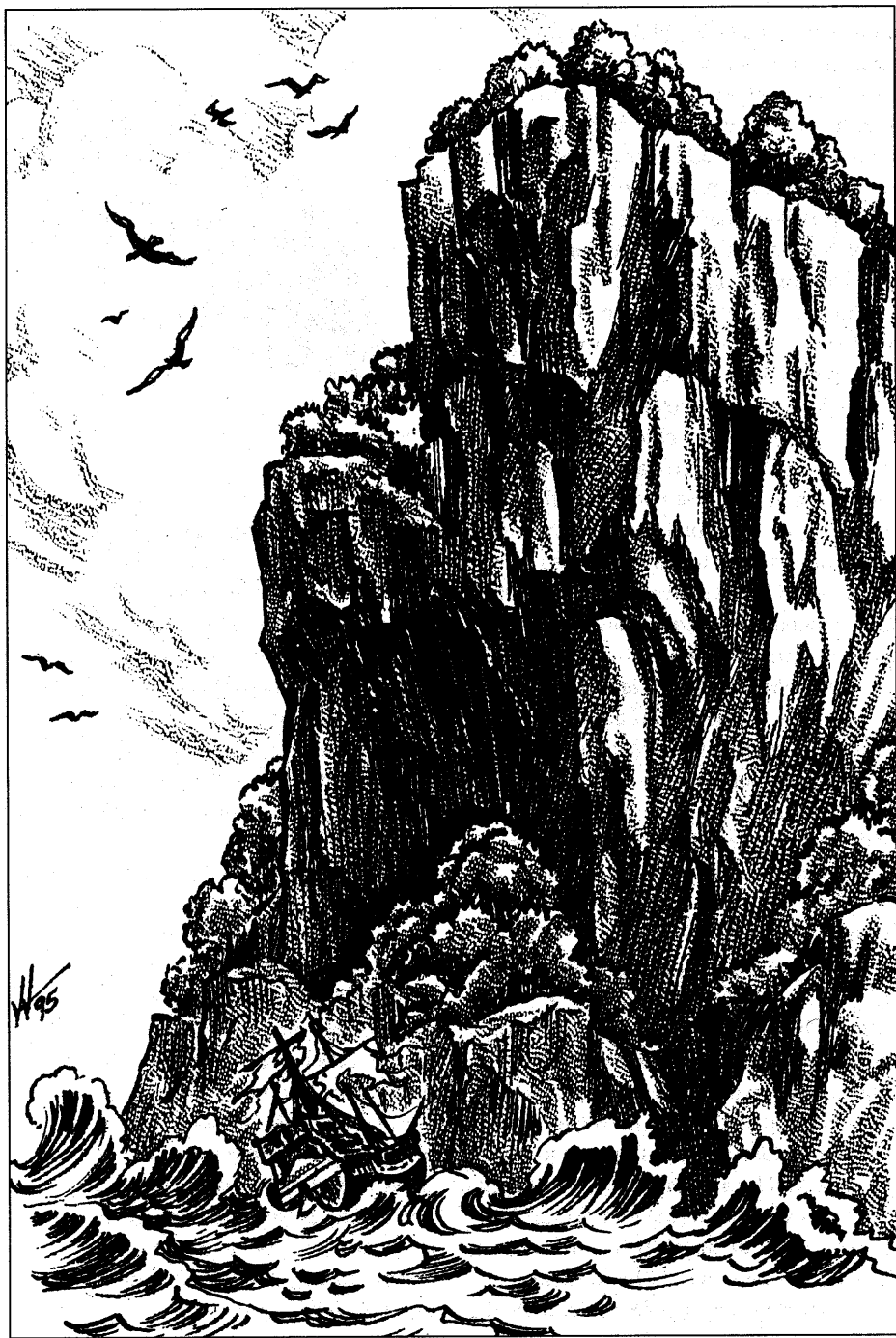
This festhall and nightclub serves a truly impressive selection of drinks—generous quaffs, too—to make its money. (Patrons negotiate separate fees with the escorts.) Guests can dance about the club to the tunes played by a merry band of resident minstrels and pluck free food from platters servants constantly bring around. The platters always hold hand meals such as turkey drumsticks or deep-fried,



breaded and beheaded whole quail.

Because of type of food served, the Touch is apt to be greasy—and even hazardous when guests start to dance with candle lamps in hand. It is, however, a place where everyone always seems to be having a genuinely good time—from the couples seeking secluded corners to overweight customers enthusiastically pounding away inches from their bellies on the dance floor.

While it is apt to be far too noisy a place to conduct business negotiations, the Moonlit Touch is a good place to watch or meet people. There are even old men who come to drink and watch the revelers every night who are delighted to chat about Arabel's past or current city gossip. At least one is a retired high-ranking officer of the Purple Dragons, full of tales about treasure not yet found, Zhentarim plots, weredragons infesting the realm, and brigands who got away. Buying him a drink also gets you an evening of vivid entertainment. The Touch is definitely a recommended spot.





The Coast



he longest-settled, most pastoral part of the Forest Kingdom is the coastal farmland between the Starwater River and the

Vast Swamp.¹ Different folk have applied the term *the coast* to different places over the years. I've defined it as all of Cormyr south of the Way of the Manticore (the overland road linking Cormyr with Sembia) between the Starwater and the Darkflow.

The inhabitants of the coast are a mix of farmers and fisherfolk, both salt and freshwater. Clams and eels dragged from the Starwater by the freshwater fisherfolk are held to be delicacies in this country, though most visiting palates find them to be too bland or fishy for their tastes. Piracy and smuggling have also long been quietly pursued occupations in the area. Although naval boats patrol the shore, there are many isolated beaches, inlets, and coves where smugglers can put in.

Visitors are advised that encountering smugglers at work can be fatal. Don't wander about near such places unless you've a good reason. If the smugglers don't get you, Purple Dragon patrols are apt to suspect you of being a smuggler and attach spies to dog your every footstep in the realm. This can put a real crimp in business negotiations, from deals with merchants to meetings with ladies who laugh of evenings. And it can earn one a permanent "to be watched"

notation in these soldiers' files. Consider yourself warned.

Hamlets

The coast is a rolling countryside of many copses, rubble- and stump-walled fields, and nameless, wandering dirt lanes that lead to small, unremarkable hamlets, vales, and villages that I haven't covered in detail in this book. For the reference of travelers, here are notes on a few of these neglected communities:

Battlerise

This hamlet is named for the hill crowned with a ruined castle that rises to the west of the Darkflow River just south of the Way of the Manticore. Monsters raiding out of the Vast Swamp and lizard men marauding up the inky waters of the Darkflow long ago reduced the population of this village to a few hardy turnip farmers and a lone waystable that stands inside its own palisade among the overgrown ruins of many abandoned cottages. There the Margar family trades fresh horses for weary ones or sells steeds outright to travelers on the road.

Several noble families over the years have had the idea of rebuilding the keep on the hill to be their own home and a base for trade with Sembia. All of them have given up after unpleasant experiences variously ascribed to smugglers, dark cults, or undead. The castle was orig-

¹Readers interested in details of the Vast Swamp (which Volo—sensibly, for once—didn't venture into) are directed to *The Cormyrean Marshes* booklet of the *Elminster's Ecologies* boxed set.



inally Battlegate, the seat of the extinct Auantiver noble family. The castle is widely reputed to be haunted. Recent rumors claim the Cult of the Dragon is using its vaults as a base and conjuring up ghostly dragon apparitions with hitherto unknown spells as well as animating undead human and monster skeletons and zombies to keep people away from the castle.

BlusTich

Blustich is a small village located on the west bank of the Wyvernflow, where Hermit's Wood comes down to meet the river. Its folk live by fishing, hunting in the woods, and farming. They are known for their windraising dances, which conjure up gales strong enough to bring down hickory nuts from the trees on the edge of the Wood by the basketful. Travelers find naught else of interest here.

Dreamer's Rock

Dreamer's Rock is a landmark on the north side of the Way of the Manticore. This long, flat-topped hill ends in a south-facing cliff and shelters a small hamlet from the worst lake storms. Folk here live by herding sheep, growing small plots of vegetables that they surround with stake-filled ditches to keep deer and other grazing predators at bay, and scratching small caves out of the lee of Dreamer's Rock to get soft copper out of its rock.

From time to time, these shallow caves are used by beasts that locals slay for food or to be rid of their predations. The caves are also used by outlaws on the run, travelers caught by foul weather, and smugglers. The smugglers often pay

local folk handsomely for the use of a private cave, but they sometimes murder the locals they paid later to silence any chance of betrayal.

Most locals lack the skill or means to work the copper and sell it to passing merchants in lump form. To an inhabitant of Dreamer's Rock, a gold piece is a *lot* of money. Some don't see more than 5 gp's worth of coin in an entire year.

The rock's name comes from its use by the long-ago elven mystic Ilyndrathyl the Dreamer. He was often seen levitating above its summit, sitting on empty air and facing into the full fury of a sea storm while oblivious to its howlings. During these meditations his mind was said to roam the far corners of Faerûn—and distant planes, too. He disappeared one afternoon in a midair burst of flame. Locals believe some *thing* evil realized he was observing it and casually destroyed him.

Gorthin

This little-known hamlet lies north of Kirinwood amid the bogs that are the source of the Evenbrook, the west branch of the River Mistwater. (The east branch, which flows through Kirinwood, is named Kirinar Stream.) Gorthin is a desolate place of stunted trees, rocky ridges, mist, and bramble bushes. Here simple folk eke out a living herding sheep and gathering berries in the bogs. Beware the local druids, who guard the community's privacy with spells that hurl thorns or create walls of them.

Like Dreamer's Rock, Gorthin is a desperately poor place. It is a seldom-visited backwater whose folk barely know what realm they're in or who's their king. The place is not worth a side trip, even



though rumors persist of gems being found in the rock ridges all around Gorthin. There's also a legend that Gorthin, the hamlet's namesake, wasn't a founding farmer but a long-ago dwarven king whose fabulously rich tomb lies beneath the hamlet. However, no one's ever found any trace of it.

Kallamarn

Kallamarn, named for an early settler, is a tiny farming village on the bank of the Starwater at the rapids southwest of Gladehap. It consists of only a cluster of produce sheds around the towpath where barges are walked past the rapids. It can be seen from afar by the tripod timbers used as rope anchors by the bargemen.

In truth, there's little else to see here, though the remnants of an orchard straggle along the banks. Its fruit, Kallamarn Catsheads, are huge green apples that were once favored in the markets of Suzail. They can be made into very tart pies and are free for the picking, but travelers are hereby warned that every year some applepickers are dragged down into the water by kelpies or other riverborne menaces.²

Moonever

This fishing village of 800-odd folk stands on the eastern bank of the Starwater River just inland from the river's mouth. Its folk supply oysters to many inland settlements. Their dripping ice carts are a familiar sight on the coastal roads of Cormyr.

Moonever is home to Hobble's Hooks (a fishhook factory), a cordwainer (a

ropemaker), and at least 20 netweavers. Otherwise, there's nothing to see here except rotten boats and rotting fish.

Nesmyth

This farming village lies northeast of Marsember among hills on the highest land north and east of the big bend in the Starwater River, where the river turns south to flow into the sea. As the tree-cloaked slopes around Nesmyth were cleared of their trees, the land dried out. Desperate farmers dug irrigation canals from the Starwater and built an ox-driven pumping tower, but the water drained away into the sandy soil, and the land remained parched. To seal the canal bottoms, the villagers brought in popper crayfish from the Wyvernwater, since the shed shells of these (somewhat) edible creatures dissolve into a glue-like jelly.

This tactic worked, but the crayfish not only devoured most of the fish in the lower Starwater, they also attracted electric eels anxious to feed on them. These eels caused many deaths among the villagers. Stelk, a cabbagelike shrub grown in Hilp as fish bait since all aquatic life seems to love its taste, proved to neutralize the discharges of eels that had eaten it for seven days or so. After the discovery of the fortuitous effects of stelk, the mage Harhansen of Nesmyth discovered that eel-shocked water from the canals—and *only* from Nesmyth's canals—glows like a *continual light* spell when poured into a glass vessel. He advocates selling light jars to enrich the village.

Nesmyth today is a community at war with itself: One faction of villagers wants

²Kelpies may be warded away by the use of hermit berries, which grow in Hermit's Wood, as described in the *Monsters of the Deep* chapter of the *Coastal Aquatic Lands* booklet of the *Elminster's Ecologies* boxed set.



to sell light jars, another wants to use stelsk to continuously neutralize the eels and make the canals safe, and a third wants to exterminate the eels, abandon the canals, and change to farming crops suitable for drier soil—such as grape vines for winemaking. The factions disagree violently, and visitors are advised not to visit Nesmyth unless they have pressing business there. If you must go, don't mention eels.

Ongul's Water

Named for its small pond, this community fills a tiny wooded valley just northwest of Hermit's Wood, where a spring rises to fill a small, round, placid lake. The lake drains westward into the Starwater hard by a small wooded island known as Hunters' Isle. A grist mill run by a descen-

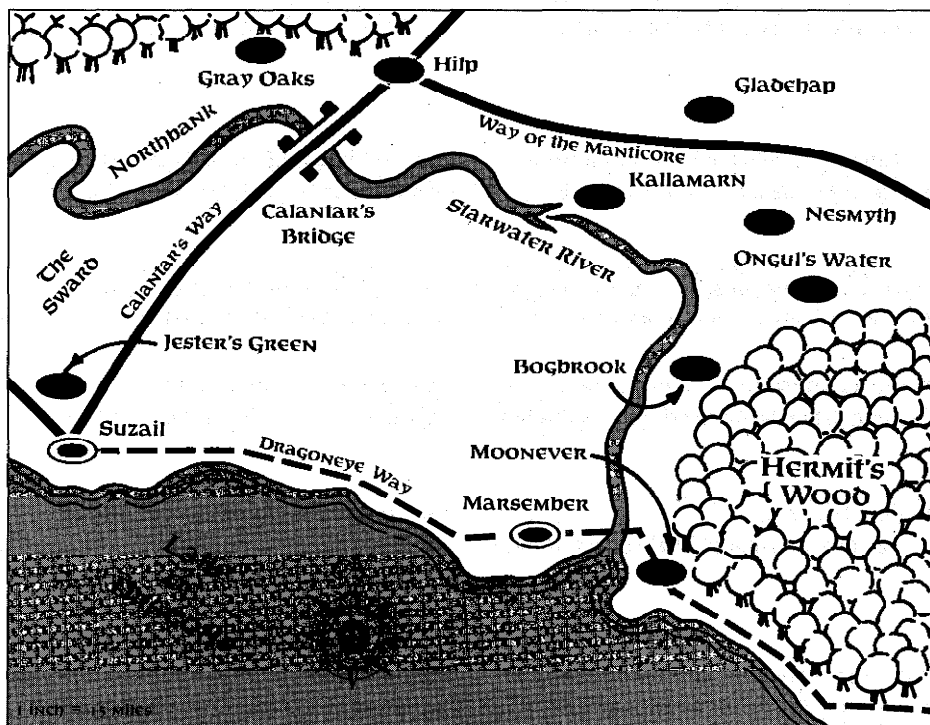
dant of Ongul, one Durkin, is the only industry of any consequence. The folk of Ongul's Water grow vegetables and raise ducks, and not much else happens there. A few brave locals hunt in Hermit's Wood and even hire out as guides to visitors who don't guess just how little of the forest these people have seen.

Smuggler's Stone

This isolated fishing village is named for a landmark rock that shelters the mouth of its tiny harbor, a harbor that has been used by smugglers to guide themselves in for centuries. It's now a crime to set lights out on the Stone. War wizards are detailed to farscry it from time to time so that a Purple Dragon patrol can be sent to intercept smuggling activities or pirate vessels quietly putting into the village's harbor to repair, elude naval ships searching for them, or reprovision.

Smuggler's Stone is a cluster of fisher-folk's huts straggling up the steep sides of a storm-swept cove. In high winds, the stilts that support the seaward ends of many of the houses creak alarmingly. There are many tales of hidden loot that pirates stored but never came back to reclaim hereabouts, and the crawl tunnels and caverns of at least one disused gnome mine underlie the hills north of the community, but there's little for honest folk to see and do here except buy fish.

The Stone, as coast folk call it for short, lies east of the mouth of the Wyvernflow. It is nestled in the cove sheltered by an east-facing point halfway between the mouth of the Wyvernflow and that of the Mistwater. The cove is shown on most maps, though Smuggler's Stone may not be.



Bogbrook

This farming village of 800 or so folk is named for a spring that rises here to form a marsh and the brook that runs from the marsh to join the Starwater River. It was once so backward that its inhabitants were widely regarded as country bumpkins. More than one son of the village who went to Court seeking to serve the king ended up in the Purple Dragons with the derisive nickname "Lord Bogbrook."³

Today, the village is well known for its splendid marrows and melons. They

grow in such profusion during the season that groaning carts set out in daily processions for the markets of Marsember. The village is also known for the raw, fiery black wine known as utterdark (or less formally as black Bogbrook water).

Made in the village by a closely guarded secret process, utterdark has an almost salty taste. Few enjoy it, but those who take to it can't get enough. There are utterdark fanciers aplenty in Sembia, Westgate, Amn, Chessenta, and even in distant Waterdeep. When used in a marinade, its powerful flavor can cover the

³There was a Lord Bogbrook some decades ago. He was one of those bumpkins who was ennobled by a Cormyrean monarch for loyal service in great danger. He vanished one night in his sixtieth summer while riding home drunk from a feast. Presumably he rode into a bog and drowned. His body has never been found—perhaps because it was weighed down by the splendid gold chain and coronet that he always wore, given to him by the king. The village is said to be haunted by his dog, who howls by night and leads unfortunates out into the marsh to their deaths in trying to get them to rescue his drowned master.



taste of spoiled food, and that and its potency make it a favorite with the quartermasters of many ships plying the waters of the Sea of Fallen Stars.

Utterdark sells for 1 gp per ceramic bottle in Bogbrook, and up to six times that in Waterdeep; it's 2 gp per bottle in Sembia. This ready increase in price makes the wine an easy source of coins for folk traveling east out of Cormyr—pick up a few bottles in Bogbrook and make a handsome handful of coins in Sembia. Utterdark is sold only by the bottle. Most traders pack a strongchest full of them, wrapping the bottles in blankets to limit breakage.

Various families in Bogbrook add their own secret ingredients to the wine to make their own superior utterdark. These ingredients are generally spices such as crushed mustard seed and the juice of berries from their own land. Why anyone would want to drink a bottle of something that smells and tastes of mustard I know not, but I suppose a cook in a large kitchen could make good use of such a commodity. Among utterdark fanciers, the vintages sold by the families of Jhalonson and Ittreer are respected, and a vintage sold by the Athantal family featuring a recently rediscovered seasoning combination is rapidly gaining in popularity.

Travelers find Bogbrook to be a wild, unkempt place of tall grasses and bogs. Muddy tracks weave and crisscross the marsh, and the safe paths are marked with posts. Leaning posts, it should be noted, denote a place where the footing isn't secure and the post is sinking away into the muck below. Folk and, more often, cats and dogs have been swal-

lowed by the bogs, but it's not a likely fate if the traveler stays on the marked paths and moves about only in daylight.

Amidst all this desolation stand the damp cottages of the villagers. Most are of stone roof with boards and turf and banked on the sides with earth planted with tomato vines and melons so that each house resembles a garden hill. Around each house is a melon patch and one or more cranberry bogs. Some families have little skiffs that they pole about in the wet. Using the skiffs, they jig for catfish, bog crayfish, lunk trout, and frogs with hook-studded lines baited with nightcrawlers, bits of fat, and moldy cheese.

The only structures of any interest are the local inn and the crazily leaning tower of Thelgarl the Thaumaturge, a long-abandoned wizard's home. Thelgarl perished over a hundred winters ago, and his crumbling stone tower is said to be haunted; it is guarded by at least one gargoye. It stands alone in its own dark pool, avoided by locals who don't dare approach to look for the magic within.

Places of Interest in Bogbrook

INNS

The Utter Inn



The name of this damp place recalls the utterdark wine served here, though the inn's mulled cider and warm ale—aye, it sounds horrible but tastes surprisingly good—are both better. Unfortunately, the rooms are dimly lit, cramped cages of mildew.



Dawngleam

As the most easterly Cormyrean settlement on the water, Dawngleam is the first port in the Forest Kingdom to see the dawn each morning. This village of 800 or so fisherfolk is fast expanding as the Cormyrean Navy sets about establishing a base here for use against pirates operating in the Neck. (The Neck is the strait between the Lake of Dragons and the wider Sea of Fallen Stars that runs west from Dawngleam into Sembian territory.)

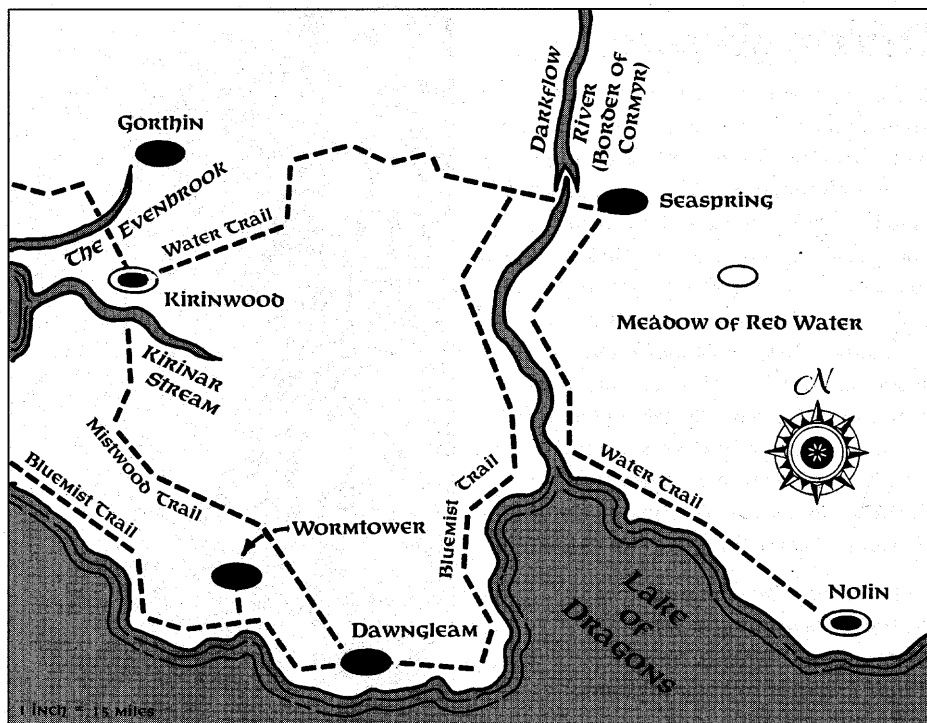
Dawngleam's name comes from a song by the Cormyrean minstrel Darbrukk Syndylver called "The Sun Comes Up Again." Part of the lyrics run as follows:

*And so again I face the sun,
Setting aside a fading dream.
Another day's battles to be won,
I smile into the bright dawngleam.
As the sun comes up again.*

Dawngleam's lack of either large nearby onshore markets or a large, deep harbor, and the prevalence of lacedons and strangleweed in nearby waters, long hampered this village from being used as an alternative port to Marsember and Suzail. The arrival of the Navy has changed things. The docks have been rebuilt and enlarged, and two ballistae towers have been erected at either end of the them. Moreover, the continual presence of the Navy has cast a protective cloak over the village.

All of this has enticed merchants into considering Dawngleam a good place for shipping goods in bulk to avoid the crowding, delays, and high fees of Cormyr's two traditional ports. Sacks of grain milled and bagged inland and whole sides of beef slaughtered and smoked right at





the Dawngleam docks are now shipped in regularly in large quantities.

Dawngleam is a place to watch, a rapidly growing center that recently fought off its first pirate raid. Emboldened, it is now planning an expansion that should see it grow into a walled city, complete with a fish-bottling operation⁴ and Cormyr's first protected clam beds. The clam beds are a joint merfolk and human venture involving a shallow cove caged in against lizard men and marauding sea predators. The fish-bottling facilities and clam beds are to be built by the end of next year, with a new shipbuilding dock coming into operation soon after that.

Cormyrean and Sembian investors alike are lining up to buy land marked to be inside the future city walls, and war wizards are watching over the growing community. Already they've uncovered and slain an adventuring band hired by interests in Westgate to poison the village's wells and sabotage some work on the docks. Buildings are rising by the month, and war wizard teams are busy casting spells to harden the mud of the roads into the dark and pliable hard-wheel surface that's already replacing cobbles in Suzail and Marsemer.⁵ Bright days look to be ahead for Dawngleam.

Before the expansion of the docks began, Dawngleam's shore consisted of a

⁴Developed in Chessenta, this new process preserves fresh-caught fish for transport and sale throughout the Realms by packing them in seasoned oils rather than barrels of salt and encasing them in earthen shells against spoilage. Wooden racks and crates guard against breakage of the fired clay shells.

⁵Elminster says the spell turns the mud into a rock and tar substance very like our asphalt.



maze of tiny rocky islets joined to the shore and each other by rickety bridges that were often swept away by the fury of fall storms. These islands made ideal places for picnic feasts, trysts, and other meetings where the participants didn't want any eavesdroppers to overhear what was said. They also made ideal anchor points for the builders of the docks. Dawngleam has, in the process of dock-building, lost the beauty of its scattered islets but gained a large and splendid giant hand of quays (each wharf a finger). The entire assemblage shelters the shore, where a basin has been dug out by magic so that the sand beaches of the cove can still be used for net fishing—at least until the clam hatchery gets going.

The islands—which were once covered by a tangle of pines and stunted duskwood and felsul trees—may have been altered beyond recognition, but locals report that an ancient magic appears to have survived the building. Local lore holds that in olden times there was a citadel of sorcerers, Soond Sharr, at Dawngleam. It was founded by an elven mage who hoped to be able to control human incursions into the future Cormyr by training a fellowship of elven, half-elven, and human mages to believe that humans should settle in the grasslands. The forests would be left as untouched as possible and become hunting preserves administered by the elves and by the Soond.⁶

This dream had glorious beginnings but soon perished in blood and fire. The islands are those parts of the citadel's foundations that were strengthened by magic. They survived the pounding of the waves after a dragon tore apart the castle

above them to devour the mages within and make off with their magic and riches.

Part of the enchantments remaining on the islets enable any being who says the words "mother bridge" at the right spots—precise locations, I'm told—on any of the islands to awaken dormant magic and cause a ghostly bridge to fade into view. The enchantment works even though the key places are built over, and it allows the awakener and any being touching him or her to cross the bridge to wherever it leads—the next isle or the shore. Other creatures *cannot* cross, no matter how closely they follow, unless they know how to invoke the bridge into being, too.

Once a given bridge has been invoked, it can't be made to appear again until the next new moon has passed. Knowledge of this spell has enabled dueling pirates and smugglers to escape their foes on several occasions throughout the years. The ghostly spans are said to have also given the High Lady Alustriel the inspiration for the fabled Moonbridge of Silvermoon.

Landmarks

Dawngleam is still a small village. The only thing that strikes the eye beyond a charming clutter of cottages and fresh roads in a network leading to nowhere is the large docks, which are backed by a row of warehouses and flanked by a pair of squat stone ballistae-topped towers. Things may change quickly, but for the moment there are only three establishments of note in Dawngleam: one general goods shop, one inn, and one tavern. Foundations betray the future locations of several grander establishments, but they're but hopeful

⁶The Soond were the fellowship. *Soond* meant *land friends* or *land lovers*, and *Sharr* meant *hold* or *towers of*.



dreams as yet. Still, we must all have hopeful dreams to reach for, or life becomes a truly aimless journey. . . .

Places of Interest in Dawngleam

Shops

Argyr's Realmsry

General Goods



This large warehouse is crammed with everything from candles to cheeses and chairs to secondhand fine nobles' gowns and gloves. Locals come here to buy rope, food, wine, nails, tools, clothes, furniture, and all the oddments of life. The fat and surly proprietor, Austas Argyr, is a balding man with a pepper-and-salt beard and endless tales of how he was swindled out of great riches in Suzail and forced to leave town.

Austas knows many folk in Suzail and Marsember, and he will order anything requested from these cities by a customer who puts down a deposit of half the price. He is aided considerably in his intercity acquisitions by Crown agents who have been sent to help make Dawngleam Cormyr's newest city.

In a related matter, Argyr's been sending letters to Aurora for over a season. He hopes to become her outlet in Dawngleam rather than see her open up in competition. He hasn't had a reply yet but suspects her spies are everywhere. As a result, he will move heaven and earth in his diligent eagerness to attend to every need of any customer. By all means, take advantage of this. I haven't encountered as genuinely helpful—as

opposed to servile—a shopkeeper elsewhere in all my travels across the Realms.

Taverns

The Maiden Danced at Dawn



This is a damper, more windswept and cramped version of the familiar low-beamed roadhouse. It serves sausages, hot bread, cheese biscuits, buttered biscuits, and nut cakes at 4 cp per plate each, along with beer that varies from bad ale to better stout and bitters. Zzar—or some horrid approximation of it—and a small but good selection of wines can also be had.

This place seems to make its own brandy and sell it by the flask (5 sp). I saw six flasks consumed in as many breaths by local tipplers, so the stuff must be good or their palates utterly dead. The brandy is a darker red than ruby in color and is called (of course) Maiden's Kiss. Do all vintners and tavernmasters enjoy the same bad ballads?⁷

Inns

The Moondown Mooring



Although this inn is a pleasant enough local hostelry, it is preparing for Dawngleam's coming golden days by raising prices sharply and whacking on a huge, drafty addition out back. Unfortunately, the new wing is built where the stables used to be, and even the dullest visitor's nose can tell it. Also, the proprietors seem to have emptied every dump and ruin for miles to get furniture for the new rooms. Still, the food's good—and hot, too.

⁷Elminster: Of course they do, lad. Don't ye know *anything* about life yet?



Gladehap

This village of some 900 folk shelters in a little dell north of the Way of the Manticore. The dell is a tree-girt valley known as the Lost Lake because it was once full of water. The lake disappeared after a battle between warring mages shattered the rocks at the dell's south end, draining all the water—and the silver surfish the mages were fighting for possession of—away to the little spring and meandering creek of today.

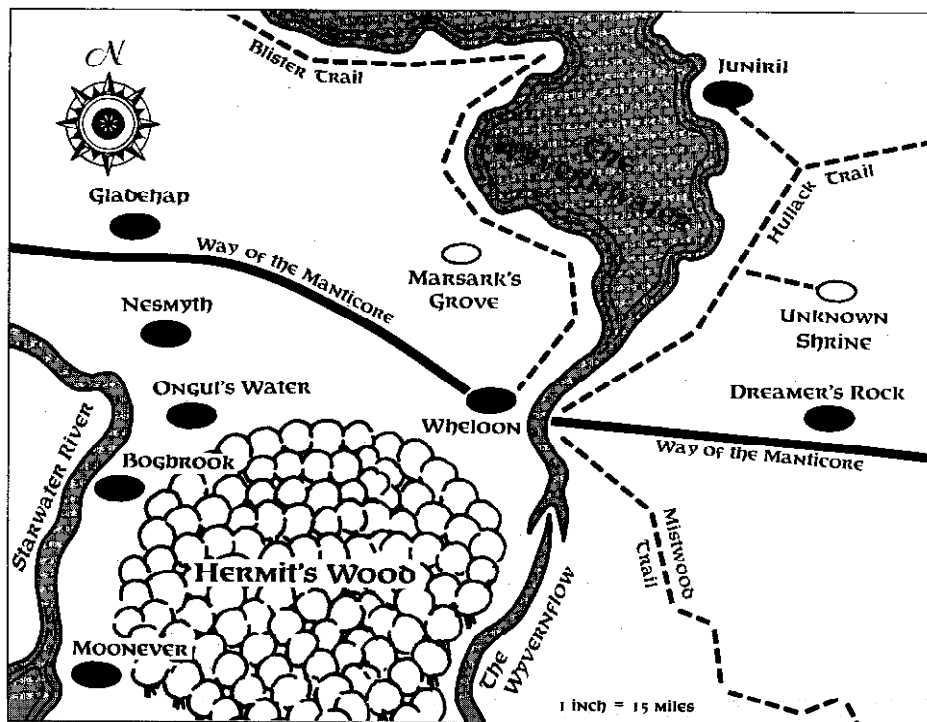
Today a happy, prosperous community, Gladehap is a refuge for many crafters tired of the hassles and high costs of larger population centers. It's a popular destination for shopping forays mounted by wealthy ladies of Suzail and for merchants bound to and from Sembia, who come here to

buy clever carved wooden toys, silverwork, aged cheeses, and furniture.

Landmarks

The houses and shops of Gladehap nestle among the trees on both sides of the dell, leaving the bottom lands to the winding creek, meandering brick paths (slippery in winter!), and parkland. Gladehappers take their highsun meals on the grass in the park whenever the weather is pleasant.

All faiths are welcome to worship at the raised plateau of Gladehap Rock at the north end of the dell. It's also the traditional site of all local duels and trials by arms. Two furious paladins of Tyr once fought each other up and down every one of the 67 stone steps that mount to it from





the valley floor before one of them was hurled off the Rock to perish in the stream below. (It's about an 80-foot fall.) His bones lie in the raised stone catafalque of Knight's Tomb that is located midway down the dell where the various paths that serve Gladehap as streets all meet.

The south end of this pleasant place is marked by the templelike spires of Chansa's Folly. The Folly is a false ruin built by a mad wealthy widow, recently deceased, so she'd have something interesting to look at out of her window every morn.

I don't believe the widow needed to go to all that trouble. Gladehap is lovely to the eyes and always alive, day and night. Cords strung across the narrow dell from pulley to pulley serve shops as washing lines and message carriers: Greased wooden tubes are hurled along the lines with notes strapped to them. The cords also serve local children and (after dark) the most acrobatic courting couples as a place to play or move about in relative peace. The endless traffic on these cords, combined with the various ornaments and toys, visible in the windows of the shops make Gladehap interesting indeed. It is a recommended stop.

Places of Interest in Gladehap

Shops

I could write of half a dozen other shops than the two I mention here, but the skilled crafters of Gladehap have mastered the art of changing what they make almost overnight to suit the fashions and changing tastes of Suzail and Sembia. A shop might make lace dainties one season, ruff collars the next, and mirror-studded

finework tapestries the third. The visitor is sure to find items of adornment and household use of stylish make and good or superb quality in the shops of Gladehap.

Barthemeir Needle & Nail Works

Steelsmiths



This smoky forge that reeks of oil clings to one side of the dell adjacent to Gladehap Rock, seemingly located as far from the other homes and shops as possible. In its many rooms the busy members of this large family fashion all manner of finely tempered steel items from the tiniest of bodkins to the best belt knives to massive spikes meant to be placed on castle doors, but they're so behind on orders that a visitor has to wave coins about to get noticed. When I looked in, the staff were fitting a series of polished armor discs onto a gown to make the wearer look like some sort of serpentwoman.

I couldn't take my eyes off the model. Finesmith Irgar Barthemeir's youngest daughter, Shaltara, is a stunning beauty. She told me that the long-tailed, smoothly articulated garment was destined for a temple somewhere in Mulhorand. She also warned me it was rare for the family firm to spend so much time on anything this large. To engage the firm on such a project, a payment of several thousand gold pieces would almost certainly be necessary.

Wyrmkindler Sausage Works

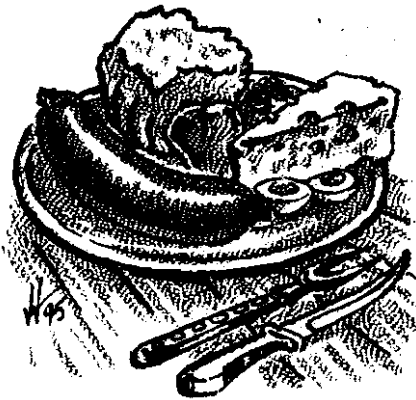
Sausages



The Wyrmkindler family hails from the



Stag Sausage



- 1 thruppinch⁸ of everry⁹ berries
- 1 thruppinch of coriander seeds
- 1 thruppinch of cloves
- 1 finger of pepper
- 1 finger of powdered mustard
- 1 handful of salt

Grind ye the meats whilst other hands chop the pork fat into thumbnail-size cubes. Work fat and meat together in a bowl by hand whilst another pounds the garlic. (Rinse clean thy hands beforehand in red wine.)

Work the garlic, the salt, and the pepper into the mixed meat whilst another smashes to powder all the spices. Mix them in, too, and pour the wine and the clarry into the bowl, working through the mix.

Cover the mixture with clean linen and let stand in a dark, secure place for half a day. Then stuff the casings and return them to secure darkness for a day and a night.

Build a slow fire of charwood and coals, and set the sausages on racks raised away from the flames but in the smoke of the fire. Smoke for at least three days, adding apple and cherry wood to the fire where available. Makes about enough for a good meal for six hungry travelers.

- 4 pounds fresh stag meat
- 3 pounds fresh pork
- 1/2 pound pork fat
- Pig bladders and casings
- 1 cup Arabellan dry (red wine)
- 1/4 cup clarry
- 4 cloves of garlic

far-off isle of Ruathym. Folk in Cormyr often make fun of the family's raw yet lilt-ing northern accents ("Yar?" "Yar!"). Mildly amused by this, the Wyrmkindlers keep to themselves, busily turning out various succulent sausages for sale in the cities of Cormyr and Sembia. Their wares are so good that their fame is spreading fast and far. I've even seen "genuine Wyrmkindler" for sale in Amn.

Wyrmkindler's best-selling sausages include Old Wolf, Best Hedgehog, and Long-Simmered Snake, but these names are deliberately fanciful and conceal the true ingredients. None of the flesh of the three named critters appears in Wyrmkindler sausages—at least, so they said.

The bluff, gruff family patriarch Aumagar Wyrmkindler would reveal only one recipe to me: stag sausage. He dryly advised me to get royal permission before I set about hunting the best stags in Cormyr (the Crown herds) to get ingredients. Hullack Forest stags will simply have to do instead for most of us.

Restaurants

Hot Highsun Handbreads



This unusual restaurant consists of a grand house that is all soaring ceilings, huge fireplaces, and bay windows shaded by artfully placed creepers and

⁸According to Elminster, this Realms measure (properly "threepinch") means as many berries, seeds, dried peas, or other loose things that the cook can pick up between the thumb and two longest fingers of one hand all pinched together.

⁹Elminster says every is a bush whose berries very much resemble what we call allspice.



shrubs. Guests can wander through it at will, seating themselves wherever they please to partake of the fare, which is light in nature but of the finest quality.

Cream-and-fruit desserts can be had here in season, and butter tarts are available year round. The selection of liqueurs and wines overmatches that at many large and famous taverns, though there's no beer. (For beer go to the Bottle, described hereafter.) The main dishes served are all made of hot sliced bread spread with a variety of succulent things, from drippings to spiced crab paste.

Despite the restaurant's name, it's open from dawn to dusk. Locals like to go in the early morn, when the smells of baking breads are strongest. The halflings who run the restaurant, the Hotbreads, are punsters and romantics.

They're very pleased when courting couples choose to dine in their house, and they always provide extra touches such as flowers and wines for free.

I managed to procure a copy of a recipe for one of the excellent pates created in the Hotbreads' kitchens, which I have included at right.

Taverns

The Baron's Bottle



This place is a relaxed, rustic roadhouse where the service is perhaps a little *too* casual. However, one has plenty of time to enjoy the view from the taproom, which is stationed on the uppermost floor. This placement is unusual in a drinking establishment,



Rabbit Pate

3 pounds fresh rabbit meat	1 onion
3 pounds fresh pork	1 handful of flour
3 pounds veal	1 pinch of pepper
1/2 pound pork fat	1 pinch of salt
3 cups Saerloonian topaz (white wine)	1 flamefruit rind
3 cloves of garlic	1 thruppinch of parsley
	1 thruppinch of thyme

Dice the truemeats,¹⁰ removing bone, gristle, and the like. Mix them together, and to this mix grind in the garlic and onion. Boil the bones and carcass leavings you took from the meat in the topaz wine. Set it to simmer while you chop the parsley and thyme, grate the rind, and dice the pork fat. Mix all of these with the meat mix, and add salt and pepper to taste.

Add flour to the simmering stock, beat it in well, and then pour this mixture into the meat mix and stir the two together. Fold the mix into a hooded metal pan, close it, set it in a metal bowl of water, and bake it in a hot oven for half an evening.¹¹

Remove and unhood the pan as soon as it's cool enough to touch. Place flat stones atop the mix and leave it for a night covered with clean linen in a dark, secure place.

but it allows a nice view down the dell—something to remember if you don't want to be seen.

The Bottle has always been owned and run by the Arcandle family, which owns over 40 farms west of the dell. It was renamed from the Arcandle Arms in honor of Baron Feredagh Obarskyr, the rollicking, lusty war leader of Cormyr during the reign of King Andilber Obarskyr (his brother).

Feredagh was famous for brawling and wenching, and his troops loved him for it. He also itched to get personally into every fight, and he led his troops rather than directing them. He was a bellowing, sword-waving, fat man with a huge red mustache that swept

out behind him as he rode in battle.

The Bottle was the baron's favorite watering hole, and he's said to have sired a whole generation of villagers by romancing his way through the local womankind. It is a measure of the respect and love Cormyreans felt for this rough giant of a man that to raise a child who looked like Feredagh was something to be proud of and not a thing that brought anger to the menfolk or shame to the family.

When the baron died, he bequeathed a bottle fashioned of gold to the tavern's owners. When they handled it in awe, they found it to be full of emeralds and rubies! The wealth and influence of the Arcandles dates from this time.

Inns

The Snowbound Hound



Picture an inn that looks and feels like a well-kept manor house, all carved wood panels, tapestries, and tiles underfoot covered with large and luxurious rugs brought from Chessenta, Calimshan, and Mulhorand. Fill it with canopied beds, thoughtfully placed hanging lamps, wardrobes large enough for lady escorts to hide in—and furnish those wardrobes with warm houserobes and the aforementioned escorts. Then invite me—please!

A delightful place, even if it's apt to be crowded (someone wanting real privacy may feel like they're in the midst of a large, endless house party), and lacking in food—but the Hound can provide warm baths and fires in chilly weather.

¹⁰As used here, this cook's term means don't include the pork fat.

¹¹As Elminster explained it, this quaint measure equals about two hours.



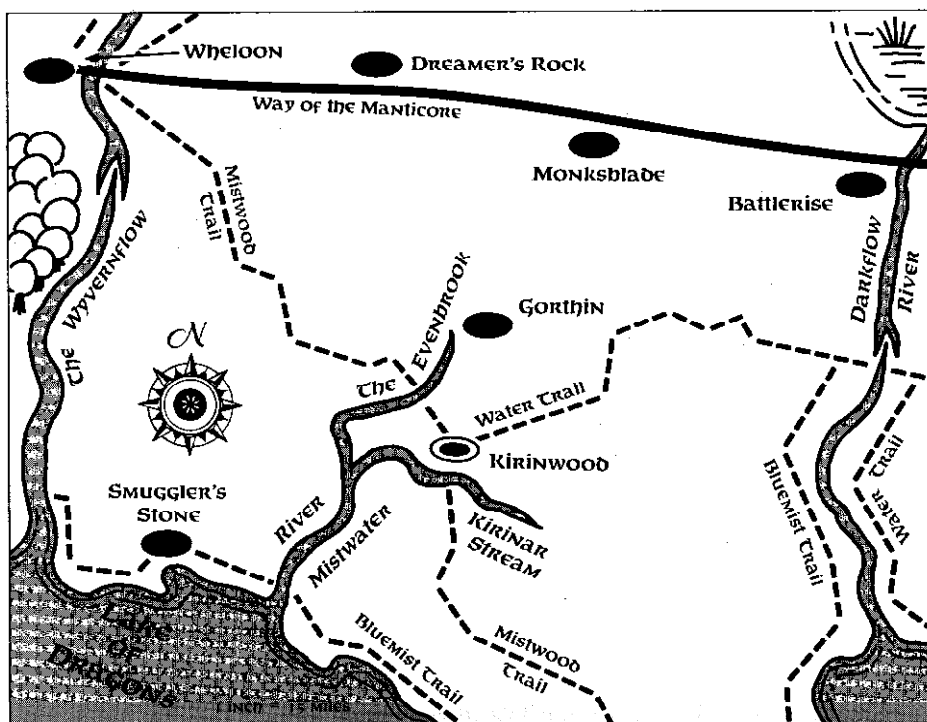
Kirinwood

This village of 1,200 or so folk stands on the north bank of Kirinar Stream, the easternmost of the two watercourses that join to become the River Mistwater. A busy farmers' market for years, Kirinwood is named for the tiny wood that rings it, sheltering it from the worst storm winds. The wood is home to a busy circle of druids, the Talkers to the Trees, who prevent uncontrolled wood-cutting by heading up a band of foresters and supervising all harvesting of the forest's bounty.

As a result of the woods and the skilled druids that tend it, Kirinwood makes a lot of fern-and-mint wine, a green broth that clears the throat like an

icy winter wind and tastes like chewing on spruce bark. Villagers here also make a fiery mushroom ale they sell for 5 sp a hand keg (and worth thrice that), and for the same price sell wagonloads of mushroom gravy in hand kegs. The gravy is eagerly sought by restaurants up and down the Dragon Coast.

The merchant traveler can also find all the usual farm produce here. Corn, oats, and wheat are brought to Kirinwood's three mills and thence to market in the center of the village. There these grains join eggs, alfalfa, poultry, and fruit. Kirinwood is in the heart of Cormyr's apple-growing orchards and also close to bogs to the west that yield bushels of raspberries and blueberries, many cleanly picked by the new gawl crawler





method.¹² All of this makes Kirinwood a great place to visit if you're buying food in bulk and of interest for its druidic forestry guidance. The only standout attraction in this admittedly picturesque village, however, is the Falling Tower.

Places of Interest in Kirinwood

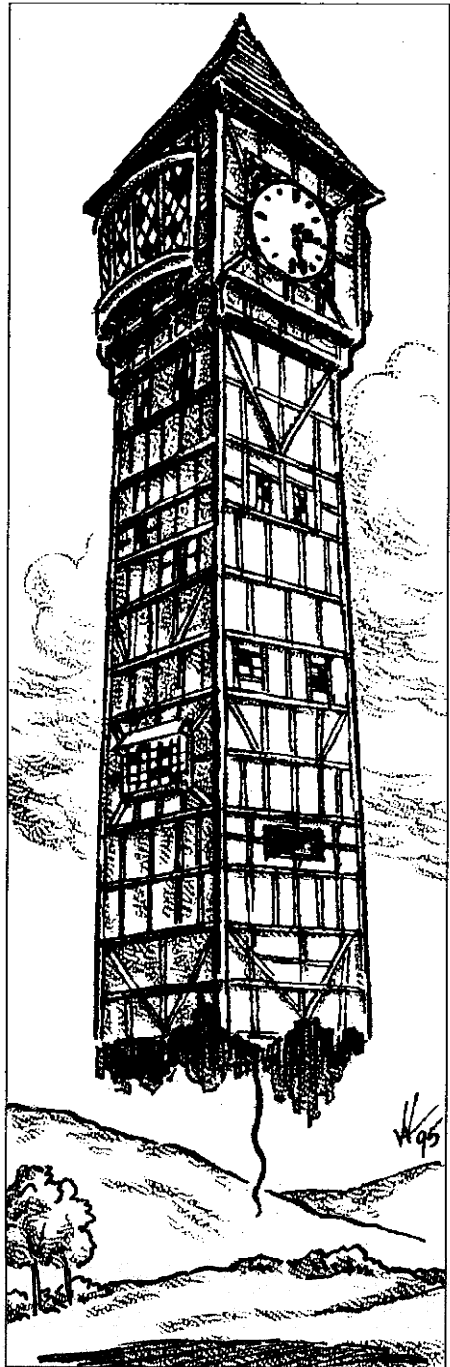
Unique Sites

The Falling Tower

Perhaps this odd structure would be better called the "Tower That Will Not Fall," because it's been falling for centuries without yet reaching the ground. A large, square timber structure with alternating clock dials and oversized bay windows ringing its upper floors, the Falling Tower was once the seat of the Kirinar noble family. Ardest Kirinar found his home too remote from the cut and thrust of power in the heartlands of Cormyr and decided to gain influence by founding a college of wizardry and a brotherhood of wizards he could control.

This doomed attempt ended in a spell duel between ambitious mages that destroyed the college and most of its lesser students, the entire Kirinar family, Ardest's dream of a brotherhood of mages, and the ground floors of the Tower. It left the Tower's uppermost bulk floating aloft some 60 feet off the ground.

¹²The gawl crawler harvesting method is an innovation from Surkh on the Deepwash wherein hungry green worms known as gawl crawlers are set upon berry bushes after baskets have been placed under the branches. The crawlers eat only the stalks, leaving the fruit to fall into the baskets. This causes some mashed berries at the bottom of the baskets, but on the whole it ruins far less fruit than picking by hand and saves on work and wages. Gawl crawlers are raised in warm caverns and sold dormant in ice-cooled hand kegs at many farmers' markets.





Powerful magic has held it there ever since, though it sometimes drifts a little from side to side or turns slightly when struck by heavy flying creatures or strong winds.

From time to time, adventurers have explored the largely empty structure. Purple Dragon patrols visit it regularly to ensure no stirges or other aerial monsters adopt it as a lair. On several occasions adventurers have left behind a rope linking the lowest floor with the ground, and Kirinese youths have dared to climb up into the structure to explore and play. As a result, several rooms have been burnt out, and anything small, portable, and readily found has been taken away.

I say “readily found” because secret closets and passages are still being found in the Tower. Check every pillar you see, I’m advised. Most contain some sort of hiding place. In addition, somewhere in the dark, silently floating Tower is a *gate* allowing a being with the right trigger¹³ to transport to the subterranean citadel of the lost mage brotherhood.

The battle that ruined the Tower is said to have consumed the combatants in devouring fire, so presumably the citadel hasn’t yet been looted. However, mysterious floating severed arms and shattered weapons occasionally appear in the Tower, arguing that some adventurers are finding their way to the citadel and something is defending it against them. A minstrel’s ballad sings of many-limbed snakemen armed with scimitars who can cast spells as they fight. As the song is recent and is the first mention of these guardians, they may well be pure fancy.

Shops

Galandor’s Glassworks

Glassblower and Lensgrinder



This small shop makes use of a fine white sand found in ridges north of the village to make glass beads, marbles, and small figurines. (Thieves buy lots of marbles, which they throw behind them to encourage pursuers to slip and take tumbles.) Galandor o’ Galandor, the shop’s owner, is a dwarf almost as tall and as fine-featured as a man; his family has intermarried with humans for some five generations. All of the living Galandors—a family loved and respected locally—work in the shop.

The Galandors’ specialties are lenses that allow those of failing sight to see and small birds and other ornamental pieces that contain air chambers and holes that allow them to be played as tiny ocarinalike musical instruments. They custom-grind the lenses for thousands of gold pieces each, selling to the noble and the wealthy in both Cormyr and Sembia. They also sell off-the-shelf lenses in assorted strengths for 500 to 1,000 gp. The glass instrument ornaments typically sell for 40 to 60 gp each. An unnamed temple in the Vilhon Reach recently ordered 16 blown-glass dragons with channels through their bodies constructed so that incense smoke could be made to drift out of the open jaws and nostrils of the wyrms.

The Galandors’ work is the best, and they provide a comfortable place for clients to wait and sip herb tea or mild mushroom ale while they wait for wares to be readied. Some beautiful glass wind chimes and hanging drift sculptures are placed around

¹³Legend says the trigger is a hawk feather.



this seating area to entice visitors to buy. An arrangement of glass blades of descending sizes exhibited here is particularly striking.

Restaurants

The Old Troll's Foot



This rather rustic, dimly lit establishment makes liberal use of ambulatory fungi for fighting on its bark-and-vine-hung walls and ceilings. The fungi are augmented by *driftglobes* that wander freely from grotto-like room to grottolike room. Owned by Orbrar of the Talkers (one of the senior druids), this restaurant understandably looks like some sort of forest glade. Unfortunately its fare is dominated by agricultural vegetable dishes, from cold potato soup to spicy asparagus-and-artichoke bean broth.

Roast boar is on the menu, but it can only be had when boar meat is brought in from elsewhere or Orbrar agrees that one of the few Kirinwood boars can be slaughtered.

One can get bacon and wild wood sausage, which use meat from the local market, but both are too heavily herbed for most palates.

The Old Troll's Foot also features a special dish that shares the restaurant's name. Troll's foot (it's not, of course) is simply mouth-watering, but it costs 5 gp a serving! The dish is actually made of a secret mix of forest roots, mushrooms, herbs, spices, vole meat, and beef from the most venerable cattle. If they follow my advice, most visitors will order it despite its steep price, along with fresh bread (not bad), fiddlehead butter (surprisingly good), and berry crumble tarts (a gooey-sweet blend of berries).

The ideal beverages to match this





repest are either firewine or glowfire, both available here. The firewine is astonishingly fiery. The staff members claim that in order to get this smoothly blazing strength, they age the firewine for a decade after they receive it before they agree to open a particular keg.

The Old Troll's Foot is worth a visit, anyway. Where else can you go and say that you've drunk earthworm-and-bark tea?

Taverns

The Unicorn's Pool



This tavern is named for a local legend that a family of unicorns regularly drank and dipped their horns into a pool at this site, rendering it identical in properties to a *potion of sweet water*. Though the druids assured me the legend is false, this is a superb watering hole nevertheless. I don't hesitate to recommend its curtained booths to the discriminating traveler.

A full selection of popular drinks is served, all at bulk prices (by the hand keg usually),¹⁴ so buyers can entertain a group or take home any remainder in the morning—or whenever they're next able to stand. Persistent rumors tell of a mind flayer and a lich being regular drinkers at the Pool. Accompanied by capable, heavily armed human bodyguards to discourage anyone from attacking them, they can supposedly be found in their favorite booths most nights. I saw them both but must report a regular patron claims they're really mischievous dopplegangers. They invite folk to drink, and then they gather informa-

tion from the loose-tongued to amuse themselves and to sell to others for profit.

Inns

Daliver's Door



This pleasant place places a high value on privacy. The walls drink sound, and suites are arranged with little winding halls and closets to hide one entry door from another. These architectural features plus the low lighting make the place ideal for trysts and engagements with professional escorts, I suppose, but a maze for most of us.

If you're worried about spies or folk trying to do you harm, be warned that this place could conceal a small army of them, and I know for a fact several of the hall tapestries contain spyholes used by the staff. A fellow guest complained of giggles from an unseen source when he was entertaining a local lady in his room, so I'd not be surprised to learn that spyholes can be found in the bed hangings, too!

On the other hand, Daliver's is one of the few inns in the damp coast lands that I found warm enough for true open-shirted comfort in the winter. Moreover, the handsome host Daliver, a somewhat-retired adventurer, employs three tall, hugely muscled bouncers to discourage rowdy behavior. By their appearances, I'd say they have gnoll blood in their families' pasts.

As a result of the bouncers and the building layout, Daliver's offers exclusive and quiet accommodation to a degree seldom found outside of monastic communities; I enjoyed all of my stays.

¹⁴*Aurora's Whole Realms Catalogue* provides details of most of these drinks, such as Bitter Black stout, Dragon's Breath brew, Shadowdark ale, suzale, Arabellan dry, blood wine, Saerloonian special vat, Saerloonian glowfire, and Westgate ruby.



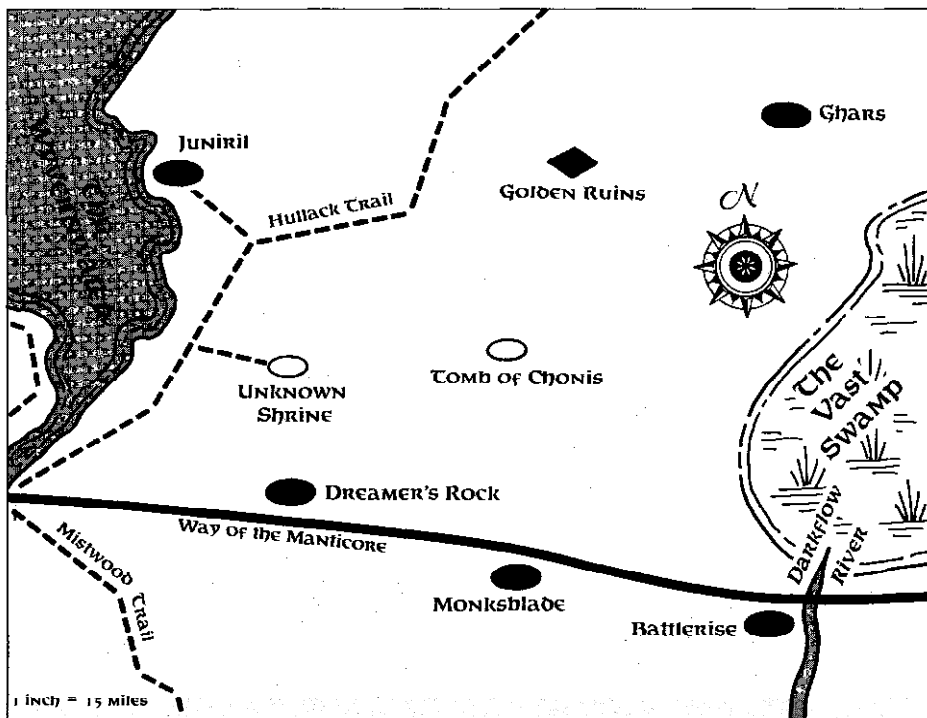
Monksblade

The name of this hamlet, strategically sited on the Way of the Manticore east of the Wyvernflow crossing at Wheloon, commemorates its past. The present-day settlement, a popular night stopover for merchants traveling betwixt Cormyr and Sembia, is built from the crumbling ruins of no less than four monasteries. Of old, Monksblade was home to holy houses dedicated to Chauntea, Tempus, Tyche,¹⁵ and Umberlee.

The Watchers Over the Land were a rare militant order of worshipers of the Lady of Grain. Derisively called “straw-

heads” by others, they believed humankind couldn’t survive in these savage northlands without plentiful food. This food would be provided by prosperous farms whose workers were well protected and had good roads to get their goods to law-abiding, peaceful villages and ports. From their base here in Mother Chauntea’s House, the Watchers busied themselves establishing and enforcing laws to promote their goals. Their militant activities focused on maintaining road patrols. Their work did much to clear the coastal lands around of monsters that had been so numerous that they’d raided the eastern steadings of Cormyr more or less at will. However, the war-

¹⁵Tyche is the predecessor to both Tymora and Beshaba as the goddess of luck, both good and bad. It is unclear whether she gave birth to the two goddesses who replaced her, as they are often referred to as her daughters, or whether she somehow “split” and transformed into two separate goddesses.





rior-priests of Chauntea suffered grievous losses in this ongoing battle even as admiration for their work was spreading and a patriarch of Tempus in the Vilhon reported that Tempus deemed the situation in Cormyr worthy of his aid.

The Red Knights of Tempus arrived in strength and made war on the monsters, clearing an ever-larger area for the Watchers to police. The Red Knights rode out of the Towers of War, a keep at the eastern end of the present-day hamlet. (Its ruins now house the popular Firedagger Inn.) Their success attracted a flood of settlers from Sembia and the Vilhon, and these folk brought two strong faiths with them: the worship of Tyche, Lady of Fortune, and devotion to Umberlee, Stormgoddess of the Seas.

The Followers of Fortune built the Lady's House, a fortified abbey at the

heart of the gathering of holy houses. From there the champions of Tyche fared far and wide across the coastal lands all around the Sea of Fallen Stars. Known to all as the Lucky Knights, they were the shining-armored, noble knights errant whose exploits and wooings gave Cormyr its dashing, romantic reputation across the Inner Sea lands. Theirs is a legend that still shines brightly today, though the Lucky Knights are dead and gone these 300 winters.

The followers of Umberlee were known as the Worshipers of the Wave and dwelt in the House of the Seas, a sprawling, many-towered manor house built beside and around the Lady's House. Its wings and outbays stretched seemingly for miles, and most of the buildings a traveler sees in Monksblade today are fashioned from





them. (This original form as one conjoined structure is why so many of the houses seem to be joined or possess stables and covered sheds that stretch almost to touch the next abode.) The faithful of Umberlee spent their time making offerings to the Queen of the Deeps to keep coastal shipping and fishing as safe as possible. Empowered with magic that enabled them to breathe in the watery depths, they went twice a year to capture monsters of the deep to sacrifice in honor of Umberlee. The rest of the year, they crewed small, fast boats and furiously waged war on pirates in the name of their holy lady.

This unusual state of cooperative coexistence allowed the countryside and all four temples to flourish, although it attracted raid after raid from brigands, lizard men from the nearby Vast Swamp, and Sembian interests seeking to infiltrate and take over the monastic community. Eventually, these persistent forces succeeded in depopulating the monasteries, though it took centuries. After lying vacant for some years, the ruins were taken over by villagers sponsored by the Crown of Cormyr. The king did not have spare coin enough at the time to build or man an easterly keep to defend the lands about and had grown tired of brigands setting up rival court in the abandoned holy houses, so he financed the efforts of the villagers and gave them what logistical and military support he could. The inhabitants of today's Monksblade hark back to those intrepid Crown-sponsored souls.

Landmarks

The growth of other communities of the coast has drained away some of the life

from Monksblade since then, but what's left is a delight to the eye. The village is all huge old trees shading charmingly overgrown gardens and cemeteries. Crumbling ruins and cottages are visible wherever the eye turns.

The monasteries were founded here in the first place because of a deep well of clear, fresh water. The presence of a well has long been a fixture in the walled gardens of Mother Chauntea's House, but this site is regarded as holy by worshippers of Chauntea and is an attraction that interests many other folk because of the macabre associations it has acquired.

In the failing days of the holy houses, several unscrupulous mages led expeditions to pillage the monks' riches. They were fought off by the last few Knights of Tempus and Tyche, who fought side by side against these defilers. Six of these devout defenders met their ends beside the well. Its present name, Lost Knights' Dance, commemorates their horrible deaths. They were transfixed with arrows while helplessly shuffling about in the grip of *Otto's irresistible dance* spells. Their shadowy, fully armored forms still appear here on some moonlit nights, dancing silently about the gardens. They are said to point out secret ways into the holy houses and the location of buried treasure (or its former location) to living folk they encounter who bear the holy symbols or devices of Tyche or Tempus.

Some 300 folk call Monksblade home these days. Some of them have undoubtedly followed up these spectral directions. Any treasure that can easily be reached has already been recovered, but there are persistent rumors of deep cellars in these monasteries that haven't yet



been opened up. Some, it is whispered, even contain a temple dedicated to an evil cult that may still survive. There are also many legends of holy swords, dedicated to Tyche and Tempus, hidden away deliberately in the vicinity of Monksblade by dying knights who struggled back from secreting their blades to fall dead in the consecrated inner courtyards of the monasteries they'd served so diligently. Certainly the teachings of Tempus identify Monksblade as a place where sacred swords still lie, awaiting those who'd find favor with the Lord of Battles by taking them up and wielding them for good.

To most visitors, all this history is merely a succession of pleasant stories to hear as they relax by the fire at the famous Firedagger Inn, having a last mulled cider and a plate of hot buttered mushrooms. Thea, my serving maid, tells me these mushrooms are picked in the ruins. The caps are thrust into a covered pan of melted butter and fried with salt, a pinch of basil, and just a sprinkle of fire-fruit or lemon juice until they are full of their own brown broth, and then they are served hot. The mushroom stalks are added to chicken stock for morning soups. Simple fare but fit for the gods!

In addition to the cozy inn, Monksblade boasts Hunting the Knight, a superior tavern (another allusion to the hamlet's monastic past), and the Old Oyster, a superb restaurant. The Oyster is better than any dining house in Suzail! The hamlet also features a swap-horse stables, a tack and ironmongery shop (both adequate but average), and Wendeira's Wondery—a shop worth seeing.

Places of Interest in Monksblade

Shops

Wendeira's Wondery

Oddments and Minor Magical Items



This strange, cavernlike shop is crammed with a tumbled mess of the splendidly odd and unusual. Many of this shop's wares bear minor enchantments such as kindling canisters that keep everything within bone-dry, upright wardrobes whose doors open on verbal command, or rings that glow briefly when twisted, for example. The proprietress is fully as odd as any of her wares.

The lithe, beautiful Wendeira sings softly as she dances and glides endlessly through her shop, caressing her goods as she dusts them, her dark eyes startlingly large in a bone-white face. She wears only dark gowns of fashions long forgotten in the courts of Inner Sea realms. Many folk think her some sort of undead and don't tarry, but her shop is truly a cornucopia of wonders. Wendeira buys up all the real oddities her good friend Aurora¹⁶ can find.

For instance, Wendeira offers glass fishbowls in the shape—and full size!—of voluptuous women; chairs whose arms sport brass castings of hands whose fingers can be manipulated to grasp your favorite pipe, open book, or lamp; mirrors that sing a cycle of songs when uncovered; and a full line of glow-in-the-dark domino masks, fashion accessories now much favored in Sembia, Westgate, and even in distant Waterdeep at the wilder nobles' revels!

¹⁶She of the growing Faerûn-spanning chain of catalog establishments.



These last can be had in various sizes and hues or emitting randomly shifting radiances. They can be yours for a mere 250 gp for the smallest and simplest to 2,900 gp for the one that once per tenday enables its wearer to *fly* for as long as it takes a person to breathe thrice, expediting romantic liaisons from midnight gardens to balconies high above.

Restaurants

The Old Oyster



This charming place consists of two crumbling turrets joined by a long, low kitchen. Windows (real glass, and clear as crystal!) look out south over the overgrown forest gardens that once graced the Lady's House. People looking through

them can watch foxes trot by and fireflies dance and swirl of an evening.

Here one can get (of course) good oysters that have been brought up the Wyvernflow from the fishing village of Moonever (at the mouth of the river) and the freshwater eels favored by coastal Cormyreans—who're welcome to them! The Oyster also has a large, good cellar of ales and wines. Be warned, though, that the local fern-and-mint wine is an acquired taste. 'Tis so clear and cool that it burns the mouth and admits of no other tastes for the rest of an evening!

Visitors can also get more usual fare: stewed hare, pork and beef roasts, and grilled pheasant. Yet all of that can be had elsewhere, and I urge every traveler to flock to the Oyster for the best wyvern tail to be had in all Cormyr. If you've never had wyvern tail, a treat awaits you!





Real wyvern tail is seldom available these days, unlike earlier days when the Stonelands were infested with the beasts. I can tell you it's a hard white meat reminiscent of the finest succulent pork; it is to be seized if one ever has the chance. The same seasonings and recipes originally created for real wyvern tail have often been applied to an artful chopped mixture of pork, turkey meat, and rabbit, and called "jack wyvern tail," or "Jack's wyvern tail." The mixture of the three meats somewhat approaches the splendor of true wyvern flesh.

Here at the Oyster they call jack wyvern tail "old wyvern tail," and their secret recipe includes chopped roast almonds and asparagus broth. Old wyvern tail is served on a bed of mushroom-creamed coins of fried potato. It is stuffed into a crisped skin of pork crackling that's been sewn into an arc

as thick through as a large man's thigh, aping the shape of part of a wyvern's tail. The dish is simply fit for the gods themselves! I've seen men gorge themselves into slumber on it, and the portions are enough to feed four hungry men comfortably or provide two with two full meals and a light highsun chew of sliced cold meat served in a hollowed-out handloaf of dark waybread.

Taverns

Hunting the Knight



This place is a low-beamed, cozy warren of dark booths and flagstone-floored rooms, each with its own fireplace and its own stone box of cool wine. Wheels of salty cheese, bowls of nuts, and—in season—boiled peapods and fiddleheads are





everywhere, free for the taking. The place is crammed with comfortable furniture, and patrons are encouraged to lounge with their feet up and chat the night away.

Hunting the Knight seems to be home to several garrulous old retired farmers and ex-adventurers who happily spin tales of the heroes, hauntings, lost treasures, and colorful deeds of the area's past, such as the Looking Lady. The Looking Lady is a tall, gowned phantom lady who glides eerily through the gardens of Monksblade when—and only when—sea mists have rolled in. She hurries here and there, searching for something. She has petrified many a resident and visitor with fear by thrusting her silent skull face into their window or room to look sharply all around and then withdraw it!

Local legend says she seeks the statuette that holds her soul. It is part of a hidden treasure hoard left behind by an evil wizard who enslaved her. If the treasure is found, 'tis said, she'll follow its finder forever as a guardian watchghost, even if she or he hurls away or destroys the statuette!

Hunting the Knight is my favorite place in all Faerûn to spend a restful evening. If I had to wait out the rest of my days in a tavern, this would be the one I'd choose.

INNS

The Firedagger Inn



A fitting companion to the other superb establishments of Monksblade, this house is named for the flying fiery magical blade that nearly burnt it down during a wild duel between the Red Wizard Artigaun of Tyraturos and Ondelos the Archmage of Selgaunt. Both wizards died in the fray, and

the *firedagger* was left whirling in midair and spitting flames where the dying Ondelos had left it. Banished by a summoned war wizard, the *firedagger* reappears from time to time in the same place and has to be banished again. Several enchantments on it have prevented anyone from controlling it or removing it from the inn's dining room. Attempts to do so cause it to *blink* about, spitting jets of flame.

The inn itself is a delightful sprawl of luxuriously furnished, wood-paneled rooms. Each room is a suite with attached bathtub and dressing areas, and all suites are large enough that privacy is total; one should never hear other guests by night. Meals in covered warming platters are placed onto a dining table in every room by means of an otherwise-locked serving hatch. They're simple, light fare, but perfectly prepared, and there's never a shortage of juices, teas, and warm broth to be obtained at any hour. These drinks can be summoned by pulling on the appropriate bell pulls.

The staff is quiet, discreet, and generously provides extras to guests such as soothing tales for tired or scared children or lonely travelers, foot massages and backrubs for the weary, and even opponents for those who seek games of cards. Two of the young chambermaids—vivacious sisters, Areele and Baeranthra Morlar—even provide opponents for those who wish to practice fencing!

All in all, the Firedagger is a delightful place to stay—and a perfect place for romance. It even has its own walled bower garden in which couples can while away evenings together and a stable capable of repairing damaged carts and luggage as well as bathing or doctoring weary or injured horses! Such extras add 10 gp to one's bill.



Wheloon

This town of some 3,700 folk is the southern gateway to the Wyvernwater, a strategically located ferry crossing and barge transshipment center on the Way of the Manticore. Increasingly, Wheloon is serving as an alternative to the expensive, overcrowded ports of Suzail and Marsember for the moving of small cargoes to and from the heartlands of Cormyr. Barges from Wheloon navigate the Wyvernflow to other coastal ports or cross the Wyvernwater to trade up the Starwater River to its navigable limits. This prosperous place bustles day and night, and its stone buildings grow ever taller and grander. Their roofs are all of dark green slate from Cormyr's largest quarry, a monster-haunted hole near Marsark's Grove due north.

Wheloon is a place of money, entrepreneurial excitement, and growth, where skilled craftsfolk are constantly forming small cabals to invest in new ventures. The businesses most popular with these investors are their own cut-rate transportation companies. These transportation companies must be guarded by hireswords against the depredations of brigands hired by the established costers to try to drive such fledgling competitors out of business.

Wagons, crates, and barrels are turned out constantly in the shops of Wheloon, and new trades such as the breeding and training of ferrets and bluebirds (increasingly popular as pets in Cormyr) jostle for space with the established farming commerce in wheat, pumpkins, melons, apples, peaches, grapes, raspberries, and blueberries. More





bulk food and grain is shipped out of Wheloon than any other Cormyrean port, and the returns are impressive. An acre of raspberries can earn as much as 20 sewn acres of wheat when the crops of warmer lands on the southern shores of the Sea of Fallen Stars are poor or paltry.

At least one plant crop from warmer climes has been imported to Cormyr by a Whelunian "hothands" (entrepreneur): the rosecork tree from the Isle of Prespur. The rosecork was brought hence by Sarliman Eurdoe, and it is now growing up and down the banks of the Wyvernflow. It sees heavy use in buildings due to its durability and near-invulnerability to fire. It absorbs so much water that most open flames can't ignite a piece of rosecork unless the wood is exposed to hot flame for hours.

Landmarks

In this wealthy, fast-growing town, little is permanent and less still stands out as grand among the soaring stone and slate homes and shops or particularly shabby among the clusters of sagging timber and thatch warehouses. The largest landmarks are, of course, the Wyvernflow and the Wyvern Ferry that crosses it whenever travelers desire, day or night. A crossing costs 1 cp per head plus another copper for every crate or bag that travelers can't carry on in their hands in a single embarkment and another copper on top of that per cart, wagon, mount, or pack animal.

Hard by the western ferry dock stands the Wyvern Watch Inn. Across the river from it, at the other end of the ferry's route, is the Lantern Inn and Boat Rental. The western shore is the longest-settled and most prosperous side of Wheloon.

There one can find Wheloon Way crossing the Way of the Manticore not far west of the ferry dock. On one corner of the intersection stands the Wheloon Watch House, the local jail and Purple Dragon barracks and armory. Past the butcher's stockyards (easily located by anyone with a working nose) and a little way north up Wheloon Way, the Wheloon Moothouse faces the lush paddock and impressive facade of Oldstone Hall, the home of the king's lord of Wheloon, Sarp Redbeard. The Wheloon Moothouse is the local meeting hall and courthouse.

Other landmarks of use to the visitor include the God's Grove and Rathool's Pool. The God's Grove is a place of worship to Silvanus in a stand of duskwood trees just off the Way of the Manticore. The duskwood trees mark the easternmost boundary of Wheloon. Rathool's Pond is the local swimming hole and trout fishing pond. The pond was once used to bury battle dead; its rusty waters aren't recommended for drinking.

Places of Interest in Wheloon

Palaces

Oldstone Hall

One of the grand old manors of the not-quite-castle sort built by nobles in the days of Cormyr's early pride, this massive, soot-darkened stone edifice is an intricate masterpiece of carved gremlins, gargoyles, satyrs, wyverns, and fanciful long-necked dragons called "jubbrawuks" by some sages. The gargoyles are said to animate upon the command of the local lord or Court Wizard Vangerdahast. Plinths supporting such sculptures flank the gates of the Hall and the





Wheloon Map Key

1. Wyvern Ferry route
2. Wyvern Watch Inn
3. The Lantern Inn and Boat Rental
4. Wheloon Watch House (jail, Purple Dragon barracks, & armory)
5. Wheloon Moothouse (meeting hall and courthouse)
6. Oldstone Hall (home of Lord Sarp Redbeard)
7. The Silvery Sembian Snail (tavern)
8. Immerhand Inn
9. God's Grove (shrine to Silvanus)
10. Rathool's Pond (local swimming and fishing pool)
11. The Blackbard (boat-building and rental storage)
12. Cormyrean Coins Coster wharf and warehouse
13. Falconstar Wayshipping (rental storage wharf and warehouse)
14. The Fish House (fishmonger and icehouse)
15. Haerldoun's Helms & Shields (armor and weaponry shop)
16. Haldos's Fine Butchery (butcher shop, slaughterhouse, and stockyards)
17. Hanno's Herbs and Medicines (shop)
18. Rallogar Hardware (shop)
19. Redbeard Rental Storage and Shipping (rental space warehouse)
20. Sendever's Stables (horses bought, sold, doctored, and boarded)
21. Slowtooth Weaponry (shop)
22. Wheloon Tack & Leather (shop)
23. Woumar's Wheloon Mill
24. The Sleeping Cat (restaurant)
25. The Scarlet Sheaf (tavern)



towering stone walls that enclose its paddock. The paddock is a rolling expanse of groomed lawn out of which rise many old and massive duskwood, oak, and shadow-top trees. Certain Harpers, war wizards, king's messengers, and other esteemed guests stay at the Hall, but most visitors can only gawk at its quiet luxury from outside the warning-warded¹⁷ gates.

Shops

I write extensively here of Wheloon's shops because they're so handy to the traveler and so eager to please due to the heated competition.

The Blackbard

Barge-building and Rental Storage



This converted warehouse and wharf is a combined boat-building and rental storage business run by Shanna "Blackbard" Northgate, a retired minstrel (and, some say, thief) who claims to have abandoned a colorful past as a fence and smuggler after several heated interviews with Lord Redbeard and various vigilant war wizards. Her vocabulary, sharp-edged singing voice, and skills as a mimic are legendary, but she never skimps on the quality and seaworthiness of the barges she builds. Just don't expect any grander a boat out of the Blackbard than a large river barge.

Despite her professed renunciation of fencing and smuggling, Shanna rents out space with no questions asked and turns a blind eye and ear to its use as a holding area for bound and/or struggling captives, spellcasting, experimentation, and the like. Such temporary afflictions of the

senses—and a semipermanent one affecting her tongue and memory for secrets despite the searching spells of the authorities—have made Shanna Northgate a *lot* of gold coins over the years.

Cormyrean Coins Coster

Merchant Coster



One of the small, fast-growing shipping concerns founded locally, the Coiners have their own wharf and warehouse in Wheloon guarded by Coiner mages and veteran warriors. This proud and aggressive organization commanded by a former adventuring band uses small, fast coast-boats to run cargoes to Westgate, Ilipur, Teziir, and all ports in Cormyr and Sembia, and it also operates wagons throughout the Forest Kingdom and the neighboring Land of Fat Merchants (er, Sembia).

The Coiners have been caught smuggling cut gems in hollowed-out produce twice now and are operating under a "vigilant watch" status mounted by Wheloon's Purple Dragons. They make a lot of legitimate money speedily transporting perishable foodstuffs to restaurants in the two realms they operate in, but they have been known to slaughter those who try to hamper their trade—notably agents of the Zhentarim and of larger, older costers.

Falconstar Wayshipping

Warehouse



To date, Falconstar Wayshipping comprises the southernmost extension of Wheloon on the Wyvernflow's east bank. The *driftglobe*-

¹⁷They bear ring wards; for details, see Appendix III.



lit wharf and warehouse south of the Coiner compound is the establishment of Mhaernos Falconstar, a slim, cultured, black-bearded man with pretensions to nobility. Mhaernos rents storage space to caravan masters and ship captains transshipping cargoes between land and water. He guards his wharf with two ettin zombies, and something worse aids the warehouse guards—something that has twice slain pirate raiding bands to the last person and devoured all evidence of the unpleasantness.

The Fish House

Fishmonger and Ice Dealer



This ramshackle, reeking old wharf and warehouse are slowly crumbling and sagging into the river. Until they're actually swept away, however, fishing boats from both the Wyvernwater upstream and the open sea to the south will tie up here daily to sell their cargoes.

Old Ascalan the fishmonger is a rather portly retired wizard who ices the fish with the help of his *ring of frost*¹⁸ and sells both fish and ice to the townsfolk of Wheloon—and to anyone else who happens by. He's also been rarely known to sell magical potions for very high fees. He loves to talk endlessly about the lost treasures and adventurers' lore of Cormyr.

Haerldown's Helms & Shields

Armor and Select Weapons



The proprietress of this shop, the fiery-tempered Albhaera Haerldown, plunged eagerly

into the life of a chartered adventurer until she saw her first beholder in the Thunder Peaks. She fled frantically as the eye tyrant slaughtered all of her companions, and she retired forthwith to this wharfside shop to sell armor and a few select weapons from the Inner Sea lands to passersby. (Once a smuggler's haven, the shop had been purchased by the band as a sideline investment.) She succeeds admirably her trade. She specializes in selling knives that are made to rest in sheathes built into the backs of shields and into greaves, bracers, breastplates, and such. The shop generally has a superior selection of shields, gorgets, and greaves, a few pairs of gauntlets, and a smattering of secondhand armors.

Albhaera is one of the most stunningly beautiful women I have ever seen, and she always wears flattering cutaway armor. On most days, a small crowd of smitten warriors hangs around the shop, bantering with her and trying to impress her with their muscles and tales of their prowess. From time to time, one of the warriors demonstrates knife-throwing expertise, or two of them stage a mock joust and such activities attract business to Albhaera's shop. Purple Dragon patrols have been known on occasion to mount daily inspections of the place. This has led to townsfolk calling out to them in the street, "Better check my basket here, look ye—mayhap Albhaera's hiding in it!"

Haldos's Fine Butchery

Butcher



Much to the annoyance of his neighbors, some of whom never grow used to the

¹⁸Treat this as a *wand of frost* with endless charges. Ascalan's sons, who also do the loading and unloading, pump river water in large tanks and thence into pans that Ascalan can easily freeze once they're full of fish.



sounds of Haldos cheerfully wrestling a calf to his chopping block and beheading it, this huge, spade-bearded giant of a man has his slaughterhouse, shop, and stockyards right in the center of town. Not that anyone would dare to argue with Haldos about the placement of his business—or for that matter, about anything.

Although most prefer their meat smoked and hung, Haldos is one of the few butchers who can slaughter on the spot and provide meat as fresh as it be gotten. This ability is valuable to certain cooks, alchemists, priests, and mages for varying purposes.

Hanno's Herbs and Medicines

Herbalist and Physic



The always-smiling Hanno Minstrelsong was once, under another name, a thief so successful that he had to flee Amn with magical aid to elude no less than six separate pursuing would-be assassins. Now he's settled down to a good-natured life of dispensing physics to passersby and selling bulk powdered and bottled herbs purchased from halfling hamlets in the coast and east reaches farm belt to caravan merchants headed for markets in Suzail, Westgate, and Sembia.

One of the mixed remedies Hanno sells is a short-duration but almost absolute slayer of pain. Warriors who've just lost limbs in battle have been known to fight cheerfully

on after it was administered to them.

Another secret mixture puts humans, half-elves, or elves into a sleep so deep that they can be wounded or even tossed down flights of stairs without awakening them.

The rarest and most valuable of Hanno's wares is the spellbane herb. He typically has only a small live plant or a hand keg of dried leaves in stock. He only parts with the plant for 100 gp or more. Pieces from it are 40 gp or more, and dried leaves are 25 gp each.¹⁹

Rallogar Hardware

Hardware and Rope



Across the street from the Wheloon Watch House, at the intersection of Wheloon Way and the Way of the Manticore, Zendaros Rallogar runs an old-fashioned hardware shop, the sort that still looks like the old, dusty stables it once was. It's even complete with a hayloft crammed with old junk—and occasionally patrons who've paid hastily but handsomely to hide from inquisitive Purple Dragons or to eavesdrop unseen from above. Here one can buy all manner of old, rusting junk and new nails or select from a huge array of hooks—from the sort that hold high-fashion masks to ladies' hairdos, right up to monster-sized hooks designed for towing one barge by another.

The other equipment Zendaros takes

¹⁹Spellbane is a plant that apparently grows only in Cormyr in spots of deep shade, where it can cling to rocks—that is, in rock clefts, on forest rock piles, and in cave mouths. Chewed and swallowed, it affects, so far as is known, all living creatures in the same way: Any spellcasting abilities are deadened (effectively lost) for 3d4 hours. During the same time the creature that consumes a piece receives a magic resistance or an augmentation to any resistance it may already possess. The ability of a being to wield and command magical items is unaffected by spellbane.

Consuming a sprig or dried remnant of spellbane increases a diner's magic resistance by 5%. Devouring an entire fresh plant benefits magic resistance by +10%. If a total amount of spellbane larger in volume than a human head is consumed at one time, magic resistance is created or improved by +20%; this is the maximum possible known benefit from eating spellbane. These benefits supersede one another; they're not cumulative.



care to keep in around is rope and wire. He stocks lots of it, in all sizes and lengths, from thin, black, waxed stranglers' cord to cables as thick as a brawny warrior's forearm used for ship-towing. The fiercely mustachioed Rallogar sells several gross of wire twists daily to merchants seeking to fix loose cargo down, and lengths of good hempenspun rope up to a thousand feet long can be had here on drums that fill a small cart. Rallogar's store is a browser's paradise.

Redbeard Rental Storage and Shipping Warehouse and Goods Handler



This three-floor warehouse stands hard by the public wharf on the west bank of the Wyvernflow. Shaped like an arrowhead,

with two converging wings, it is the tallest, most massive stone structure in town and is steadily being improved to make it more defensible and fireproof. The uppermost floor was converted from timber to stone barely three seasons ago, and the thatch was replaced by a new roofpeak and tiles.

Owned by Lord Sarp Redbeard, this establishment is the cleanest, most heavily guarded, and best kept storage facility on the entire Way of the Manticore. It is a great example of how the wise merchant invests heavily in his business to make slow and steady money rather than pulling out as many coins as possible and letting the business sink into squalor.

Trained war dogs aid veteran warriors in guarding the place against rats, snakes, and larger, two-legged vermin. A rooftop watchpost guards against surprise pirate



attacks or raids from the air, and the entire compound is designed to give fire—even incendiary missiles—little to feed on. Even the loading dock is the best I've seen anywhere. It is covered from the weather, amply equipped with flatcarts, and fitted with overhead rolling-beam hoists.

The guards here have been specially trained in vigilance, and the warehouse crew takes care to give all cargo the best handling possible. The crew covers things that must be kept from the light, moves things about that should be moved from time to time, and uses handbarrows of fire-heated rocks to heat cold corners of the warehouse during winter storms so that temperature-sensitive cargo is not damaged.

Redbeard's Rental Storage is superior business; Lord Redbeard is to be commended. Those whose trade involves storage would do well to tour this facility.

Sendever's Stables

Stables, Equine Trainers, and Horse Physics



On the east side of Wheloon Way one block north of the Moothouse stand the ample paddocks of this large and efficient operation. "Horses Bought, Sold, Doctored, and Boarded" read the signs at the gate, and Illumor Sendever does all of those things, assisted by an expert staff of over a dozen hostlers, trainers, and horse-husbanders. Their specialty is in quickly and correctly diagnosing and treating ailments and injuries of horses, mules, and donkeys. Most of them can tell in a breath or two if a mount's been drugged to kill pain and so disguise lameness. By the same token, the merchant who leaves his mount here can

be sure that it will be in good health, well fed, and properly exercised on his return. If it's not so prepared for any reason, a better beast will be waiting in its stead.

Such service has won Sendever's an enviable reputation for reliability. The facility does a brisk trade despite its stiff fees. Thieves in want of a few good horses would do well to look elsewhere. Hired watchers patrol the compound, armed with hand crossbows that fire sleep-venomed darts.

Slowtooth Weaponry

Weapons Shop



The retired Purple Dragon officer Nym "Slowtooth" Nindar runs this popular house of arms, which stands in the southwest corner of the intersection of the Way of the Manticore and Westbank March, the farm road that follows the Wyvernflow from the heights above Wheloon down to the coast. As befits a shop bristling with polearms and arrows, the Purple Dragons mount an armory guard on this crowded shop.

Many adventurers, hireswords, and possible brigands show up to drink Slowtooth's mulled cider and swap stories of bold and brave battle while they watch old Nindar demonstrate the proper use of and care for a blade to bright-eyed younglings. Axe-hurling is Nindar's private sport, and he often demonstrates how a well-thrown "biter" can shear through the thin, light modern shields popular in the Inner Sea lands. Thieves are warned that Nindar can hit any spot he cares to in and around his shop and can pull open several shuttered windows—including one in the shop door—from afar by using cords under his



desk. The axes he hurls through the openings then bite deep into fleeing flesh, not intervening wood!

When business is slow, Slowtooth's been known to teach the use of particular weapons to warriors willing to pay; he's skilled with a wide variety of types of arms. He leaves shop duties in the hands of his five sons while he's instructing.

Wheloon Tack & Leather

Tack, Leather Armor, Scabbards



This aromatic shop sells not only riding breeches, gloves, and belts, but a full range of scabbards and harnesses, too. It stocks everything from light thief's armor up to full studded leathers and from a bareback bridle to reins and traces for a wagon team of up to 16 horses or oxen. The proprietor, an old, white-bearded and limping wizard by the name of Landon Bhentyl, prides himself on having everything in stock at all times so as never to leave a customer in need.

Landon is a staunch defender of law and order who retired from the ranks of the war wizards after almost dying of poisoned wounds. He is known as "Wonderwand" because he defends his shop with a brace of wands kept at his belt and is always pulling out his *wand of wonder* by mistake when he wants to blast thieves with a *wand of magic missiles* or a *wand of paralyzation*.

Landon is known to wear *boots of levitation*. If attacked by strong foes, he rises up out of their reach and hurls spells or fires wands from on high. He can maintain his balance aloft when doing such things through long practice.

Woumar's Wheloon Mill

Grist Mill



Leahon Woumar runs his large, imposing stone grist mill for the farmers around Wheloon as his father did before him. A cheerful, jovial fellow, Leahon chats with everyone who drops by and serves many townsfolk as a confidant. Though he never betrays who said what to him, he is a good source of local gossip, rumors, and opinion. The local Purple Dragons go to him to find out how Whelunians really feel about royal edicts and decrees and Lord Sarp's judgments in local legal disputes.

Leahon has improved on his father's building. His mill now has separate runs for simultaneous handling of corn, wheat, barley, and pulp (vegetable greens, bones, and scraps to be ground down into meal for spreading on fields).

Often a busy, noisy place, Woumar's has an upper room that looks down the river a long way. People sit in the room and game late into the night. Several Purple Dragons are of the opinion that they're watching for the stealthy approaches of smuggling boats.

Restaurants

The Sleeping Cat



This former tavern has become more and more of a quality eatery since it was bought by the retired warrior Whelgar Taerncole, once a member of the Easy Blades Adventuring Band. (The Easy Blades was chartered in Suzail but has often been suspected of smuggling exten-



sively along the Sembian coast.). Growing tired of nightly brawls, Whelgar did away with the wine cellar and the taproom and now serves only a little brandy, mead, and clarry to accompany a steadily improving menu of roast venison, fried eel soup, pork pastries, chicken and pheasant pies, stewed hare, wine-simmered goose, and aged brandycake.

Whelgar's cooks are wisely sticking to a small menu and mastering it. They remember if a particular patron likes meat rare or well-done, or if she or he likes horseradish poured on or prefers a soft and bland gravy.

The Sleeping Cat is favorite stop of mine. Were the menu larger, I'd give it a top rating.

Taverns

The Scarlet Sheaf



This rather seedy spot is the local drinking hole. It is frequented by weary farmers and passing merchants alike. Run by a onetime thief from distant Mulhorand, the tall and dark-eyed beauty Anthara "Softangles" Shalymarr, the Sheaf was once an abandoned ruin. One can tell this by looking at it.

The sinuous but fire-tempered Anthara, who's buried many a thrown dagger in overamorous patrons, believes that firmly nailed tapestries can serve to cover all manner of holes and unsightly burn scars, so the Sheaf is beginning to look like the dusty interior of a rather rundown harem. Zhentarim agents have

slain more than one foe by thrusting long blades through gaps in the walls—and the tapestries that cover them—from outside.

On the other hand, Anthara believes in comfortable furniture for weary and drunken patrons alike to lounge in and in swift service. Call for a drink, and it's in your hand in short order, brought by shapely waiting maids who always have a smile and a friendly wave for any patron. All the regulars rise to defend them if a customer grows unpleasant.

Anthara also firmly believes that a tavern is a place aside from everyday concerns. If you want to loudly discuss dark magic, unlawful deeds, or slavery, no one bothers you. Purple Dragons and others may listen in, of course. But by agreement with Lord Redbeard, what's said in the Sheaf won't be hurled in the face of whoever said it, out on the street a day or two later. In this way, the Scarlet Sheaf serves as both a gray market meeting place and a fire flume²⁰ for local society. I like the place, but the fastidious or fearful traveler may want to give the Sheaf a miss.

The Silvery Sembian Snail



This luxuriously furnished house is the closest thing to a festhall in Wheloon. It stands at the most important Whelunian crossroads east of the Wyvernflow. Run by a former priest of Sune who left the faith because of disagreements over his overtly hedonistic views,²¹ it's a cozy

²⁰Elminster says we would use the term *safety valve*.

²¹According to Elminster, the owner, Roond Asmyrk, is a CG hm C16 of Sune whose prayers are still answered by the goddess. He's merely outcast by the priesthood, and he cares not a whit about it. Several of the girls employed at the Snail are even learning Sune's teachings from him.



place whose wine cellar outstrips many nobles' palaces in Waterdeep and shames those of local lords of Cormyr and rich Sembian merchants alike.

The Snail's chief attraction, however, is its staff of beauteous and very friendly escorts. They not only serve wine and help customers drink it, they make a lot of it, too. The owner (he prefers the title "Housemaster"), Roond Asmyrk, has worked for many years on spells that can alter the scent and smell of fermented beverages so as to make them resemble other vintages. These shadow wines cost a fraction of what the true vintages do, but the discerning drinker can buy both at the Snail and sample them side by side.

Lord Redbeard has on several occasions reprimanded Housemaster Asmyrk when drunken revels spilled out of the

Snail into surrounding areas, disturbing livestock. Asmyrk now takes care to cast "sober-up" spells on both his escorts and their not-so-gentle partners when things threaten to get out of hand. Recent indoor installations of gallery swing ropes, heated tubs of scented water for soaking, and a room of haystacks with spellglow "moonlight" have also contributed to keeping the fun—and the noise—indoors.

This joyous place is rapidly gaining fame. Loyal Cormyreans are advised that its name doesn't derive from any Sembian ownership. Rather, the name commemorates a famous Sembian nightclub dancer, the Silvery She-Snail. She retired several years ago to marry a powerful but reclusive archmage who devised the flying illusions spells that made her act such a success. The mage became so



smitten with her that he kidnapped—and then successfully wooed—her.

INNS

Immerhand Inn



This little-known establishment deserves its place as Wheloon's third inn. It's an inferior roadhouse most used by drovers and caravan merchants who don't want to venture into the crowded streets of Wheloon. Run by the retired mercenary warrior Chalthos Immer, the Immerhand is a dark, rustic building that stands at the northwest edge of Wheloon at a waymoot just north of Rathool's Pond.

Chalthos doesn't provide anything to eat or drink, and guests must pump their own wash water, stable and feed their own beasts, and use an outhouse across the muddy wagonyard out back. The furnishings are a fascinating mix of bought, scavenged, and clumsily home-built beds, stools, and sitting chests. Each room is lit by a massive storm lantern of the sort that never failed Chalthos during his fighting career, and each room has just one touch of luxury: a painting looted by the proprietor from somewhere in Faerûn!

The Lantern Inn and Boat Rental



The Wyvern Watch commands the west side of the ferry route, and the Lantern stands at its eastern end. The bluff, good-natured proprietor of the Lantern, Staephon Gylesman, is something of a scholar of old ballads and literature of the North. He makes most of his coins renting barges and small boats to guests

who'd like to take to water here with a minimum of fuss, delay, and publicity.

The inn is the closest thing in Wheloon to an average roadhouse, and the prices are a trifle high for what the traveler gets—certainly much more than those at the Wyvern across the river. So on most nights, the wyvern fills up first, and everyone who can't get in there grumbles and then makes the trip here. Large parties of travelers often prefer the Lantern, however. It has large suites of rooms with their own hearths and baths; the suites can be barred from within. Overall, the Lantern is not a bad inn.

The Wyvern Watch Inn



The largest, busiest, and most handsome inn in Wheloon, the Wyvern is a success because of its location (hard by the ferry slip on the Wyvernflow's west bank) and because of its owner's generous nature. The cynical, red-faced, stout ex-warrior Buldegas Mhaerkoon keeps his prices low. Rates are as little as a silver piece a night, with drinks, meals, and a bath included! (Stabling and feed is 2 cp per beast extra.) Some *horse stalls* in Suzail are thrice that!

Mind you, the beer is watered, the wine more so, and the food coarse bread and salty vegetable stews—but you can live on it. The rooms are private, warm, and furnished with fresh linen. Most are simple cubicles with a chamberpot, a side shelf, a row of hanging pegs, and a rope-and-straw mattress woven from wall to wall. There's no bed; the ropes are tied to rings set right into the wall. But the door bolts, and the window can be opened. What more do you want for a single silver falcon?



Wormtower

This village of 450 or so is unknown to most Cormyreans, since its folk don't travel or boast much. Named for a mage's tower largely destroyed a century ago when a dragon tore its upper floors apart, slew the mage, and took up residence in the ruins, Wormtower fills a small, secluded valley north off the Bluemist Trail and about a half day's ride west of Dawngleam.

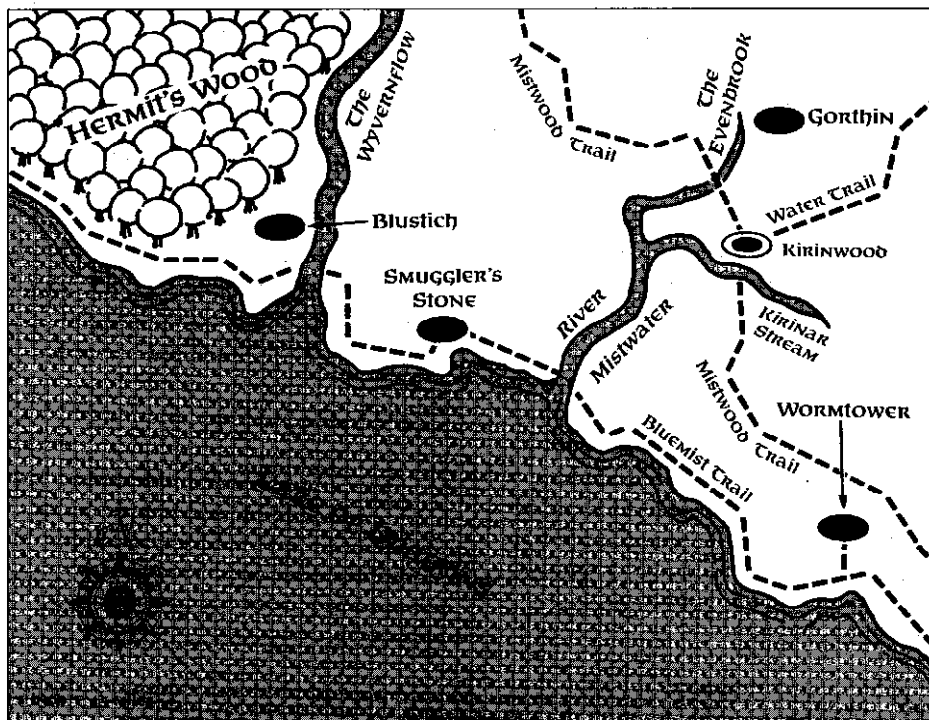
Wormtower's citizens include some of the best coopers, carpenters, and potters in Cormyr. From this vale of cottages, winding lanes, tiny gardens, and many trees come everyday useful items widely used in the Dragonreach: coffers, chests, folding chairs, shelves, lanterns, ladders, and carved trim for doorframes, stairs, and tavern booths.

There's another reason this little-known place should be in any guide to Cormyr: Many bards are drawn to its tower ruins to gaze and pen ballads. Even more dwarves come to look longingly at all the gold. Some, driven mad by goldlust, perish trying to reach the hoard. Others, ancient and failing, deliberately choose to totter toward the gold, and find death by the guardian lightnings. What hoard? Read on . . .

Landmarks

The tiny valley that holds Wormtower is a maze of crowded, steeply sloped holds divided by hedges, rubble walls, and flagstone and gravel lanes. Finding one's way around is hard enough, let alone distinguishing anything as a landmark.





There are exceptions: The road south that leaves the Bluemist Trail beside a placid pond known as Wyrn Pool proceeds up the valley arrow-straight to end at the gates of ruined Wormtower. There it opens east into a small market square flanked by the village's tavern, inn, and the Tower Shop—a trading post where travelers can buy selected merchandise from most village craftsfolk or meet with them to order more goods.

Places of Interest in Wormtower

Unique Sites

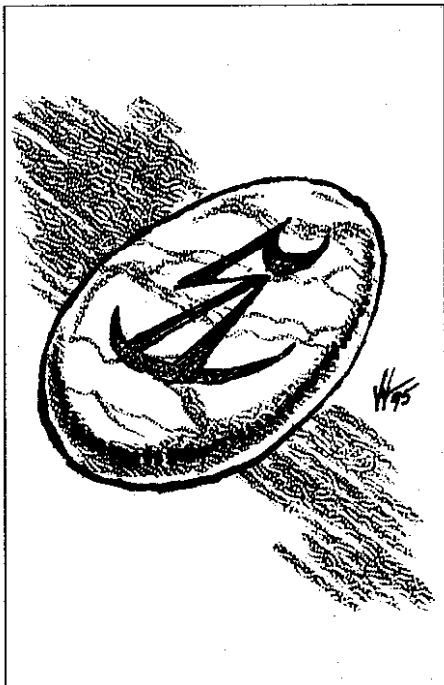
Wormtower

This spectacular stone ruin stands in the heart of the vale like a giant stone hand,

its fingers pointing forever at the stars. These fingers are the pillars and remaining fragments of stone wall. The skeleton of the dragon who destroyed the tower can be clearly seen inside, sprawled atop its huge hoard of gems and gold coins. It perished decades ago of some unknown but nonviolent cause, probably a disease. Beneath the dragon's bones and the hoard lie the dead mage's bones and whatever magic from the tower that may yet survive.

The place is shunned by locals, and few adventurers survive any attempt to approach the tower closely. To venture within 10 feet of its walls invites a lightning bolt strike from the tumbled stones. Those who persist and enter are seen to change into beast shapes and then vanish.





No one is known to have successfully penetrated the ruins and emerged again with any treasure. The wards laid down by the mage and twisted by the dragon's own mastery of magic remain strong and effective. Local legend says only someone possessing a *passage-stone* crafted by the dead mage Nendar

Thrinn that bears his rune can freely enter Wormtower.

A painting of such a *passagestone* hangs in the local tavern, but the original used by the forgotten limner was shattered to dust in a duel between greedy wizards. It's not known if any other specimens still exist, though it is certain that Nendar had a hidden refuge somewhere in Cormyr, complete with potions, spellbooks, and magical items for emergency —presumably including a spare *passagestone*²².

Shops

Tower Shop

Furniture and Local Crafts



This sprawling, cluttered shop burrows into and climbs the side of a small knoll. It is made of a series of small, crowded rooms linked by short, steep stairs and unexpected archways. Lit by cages of glowmoss, the rooms are crammed with a wide variety of furniture and other items made by local craftsfolk.

The proprietress, Bruima Shalut, can arrange business meetings by bringing villagers to her back room to meet with

²²Any living being approaching within 10 feet of any part of Wormtower's walls from any direction (in other words, cellar floors and uppermost spires are included) is struck by a 14d6 *lightning bolt*. Victims who make a successful saving throw vs. spell take only half damage.

Any solid organic mass, alive or dead, that moves within Wormtower's walls must make successful a saving throw vs. spell each round or be affected by a *shape change* spell, turning the fungus, plant, or creature into a random life form not of its own choosing. The shape a transformed being assumes is, however, a shape able to survive in the conditions prevailing in Wormtower—in other words, not a waterbreathing aquatic form or one requiring extremes of temperature for survival. Dead organic forms change shape but do not regain life.

Whenever something within the walls of Wormtower is so transformed, it is *teleported without error* to a random location in Faerûn on the following round and then changes shape again. The transformed being receives no saving throw against being teleported or transformed once more, but the second shape it assumes is again one that can survive in its new surroundings.

These defenses have caused the disappearance of many adventurers over the years. The war wizards long ago decided to expunge all records of Wormtower and quell tales and rumors about it to stem the flow of disappearing young adventurers. It is thought the presence of a *passagestone* turns off all of these defenses in a 90-foot-radius area of effect around the *passagestone* for as long as it is present.



patrons by means of several swift-footed errand boys. She can also tell visitors where in the valley they can buy used goods and trophies: remnants of defeated monsters and pieces of old armor and weaponry once borne by the formidable and the not-so-famous.

Bruima is said to defend herself with several enchanted flying daggers that can zip about invisibly, pursuing thieves until they can strike to best advantage. Other locals say she runs the shop in league with a family of leprechauns who dwell in hidden rooms and passages at its heart. Armed with their own needlelike knives, these leprechauns are themselves the flying daggers that others think Bruima commands.²³

Taverns

Ten Tankards Today



This place is a roadhouse of the sort found all over Amn: That is, it is as good in cellar and provender as anywhere else but possesses many modern, clean booths and multiple taprooms rather than a single smoke-filled venue. The fare here is light and salty; it is designed to make one drink ever more.

Because of its modern multiple booth-and-taproom design, Ten Tankards has become *the* meeting place and common business office of all Wormtower. The signboard, a circle of ten upended, suds-dripping pewter tankards, is unmistakable, and the hitching trough out front is usually crowded with all manner of mounts. Visitors are asked to tie up grif-

fons or hippogriffs apart from the horses of other patrons.

Inns

The Dead Dragon Inn



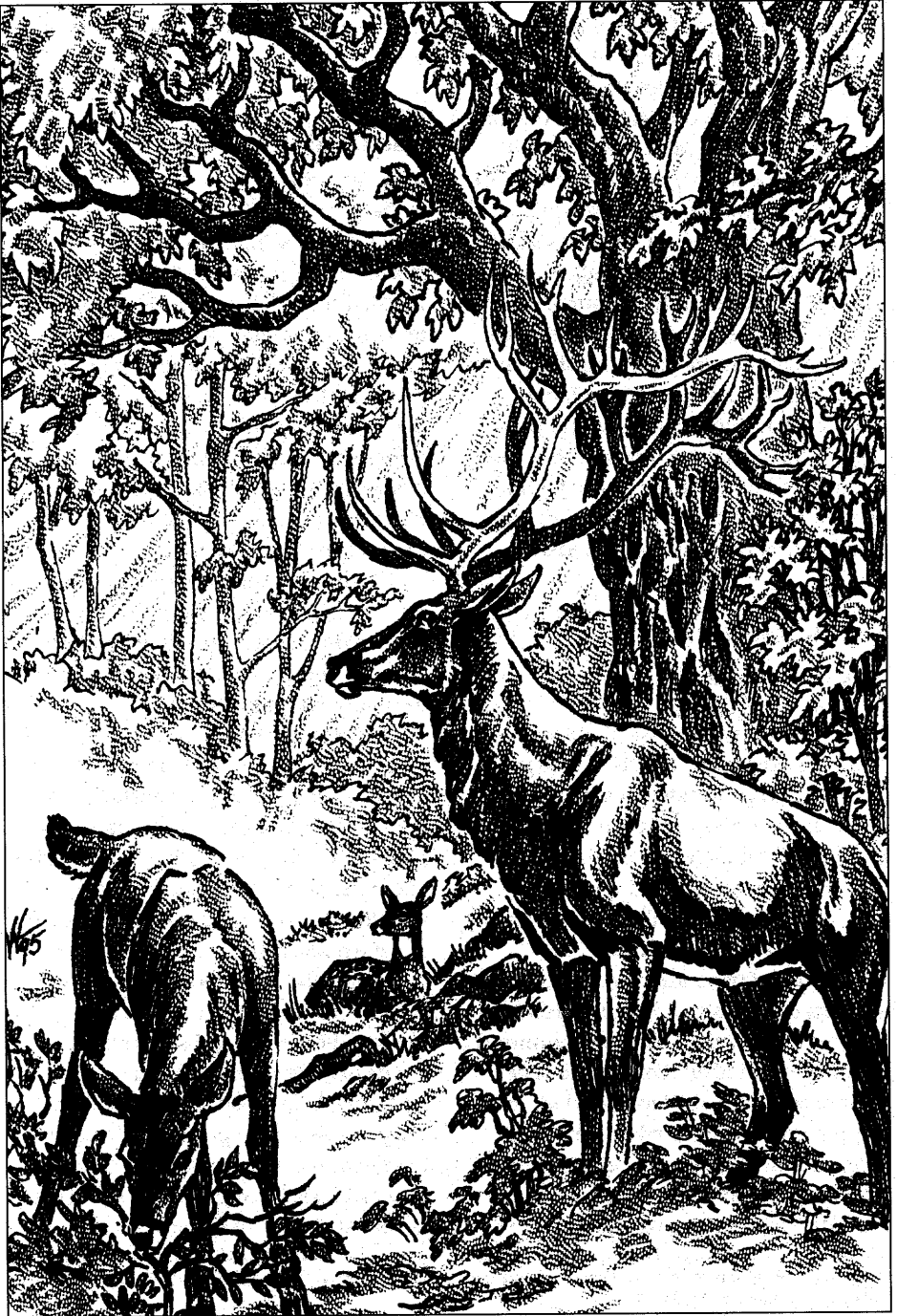
This house is a little too rustic for my tastes. There's only one hearth outside of the kitchens. That and the ill-fitting shutters on the windows make for a chilly and drafty stay at any time of year and a positively frigid visit in winter. The windows lack glass, mica, or any other coverings save a few cloaks nailed up by desperate travelers who presumably perished of cold before morning and so did not reclaim their clothing.

There are no chamberpots, and the lone outhouse tends to be a long, long way across the stable yard when there's snow on the ground. I guess that's why the windows open so easily.

On the other hand, the food is deftly spiced, expertly served, and plentiful. The inn's staple fare is a constant supply of fresh-baked bread, roast spitted fowl, a plethora of soups and stews, and special additions provided by local hunters. The nonstop bread-baking makes the inn smell wonderful.

Named for the impressive draconic skeleton its upper windows overlook, this inn is staffed by several semiretired bands of adventurers. They are ready for and capable of dealing with rowdiness. They are also quite proud of the fact that King Azoun and Wizard of the Court Vangerdahast once stayed here and pronounced the inn "delightful."

²³This is true, Elminster asserts. That is, Bruima does share the shop with leprechauns rather than having magical daggers under her control.





The Heartlands



he heart of the Forest Kingdom is the King's Forest and the villages and towns in and around it. The King's Forest is an old, deep, beautiful woodland of ancient moss-cloaked trees, deep and hidden ravines, magnificent stags, and endless firewood. Most folk picture the green vastness of the Ring's Forest when they think of Cormyr. Its presence makes Cormyr what it is: among other things, one of the most beautiful realms in all Faerûn.

No travel writer could say too much about the huge, glorious Ring's Forest that almost entirely covers the heartlands. It's large enough to spend a lifetime wandering around and holds many communities of satyrs, pixies, korred, and even elves and halflings not covered in this or any human guidebook. At least one such territory located not far east of Waymoot, the dryad realm of Aloushe, considers itself an independent, sovereign realm. Its queen, Radanathe, told Vangerdahast so when his questing surveillance spells discovered her and he issued a long-range challenge.

Cormyrean legend abounds with tales of crumbling, forgotten ruins buried under the greenery and leaf mold of the depths of the Ring's Forest, and some manors of long-ago nobles have certainly been found over the years. Who's to say what secrets the heartlands may yet hold?

Small Settlements

Most named places in the heartlands are worthy of full entries in this book, but there are some I've slighted because of lack of space. For travelers' reference, here are notes on a few of these communities:

Gray Oaks

Once known as Black Oaks, this village of 400-odd halfling folk was almost entirely destroyed by fire and fell magic during the Time of Troubles. It was then decimated again on one dark occasion when (accounts differ) a powerful priest of Cyric attacked several war wizards, or a Zhentarim mage and a priest of Cyric struck at some war wizards, or a force of war wizards tried to destroy a party of Zhentarim mages and one of them turned out to be Cyric himself!

About all that's left of the community today is blasted ruins inhabited by some halfling woodcarvers and a few hardy human families who eke out a living gathering the mushrooms and glowing mosses that grow on the rocks hereabouts.¹ Once Gray Oaks was known as the "breadbasket of Northbank," the halfling-settled farmlands on the north side of the Starwater and south of the King's Forest. It was the largest farmers' market in all Cormyr. Today, a few new storage sheds have been built to shelter foodstuffs waiting for caravan wagons to pick them up, but Jester's Green farther south has usurped the status

¹A distillate of the glowing moss is used in many spell inks and in various magical items concerned with luminescence.



of being first among markets that Gray Oaks once enjoyed.

Aside from the ruins, there's also a small inn here, the Trailswatch. It is used by Suzalans of middling means who've purchased one of the few hunting licenses granted to commoners each year. Guides trained and themselves licensed by the Crown (and widely and rightly believed to be undercover Purple Dragons) dwell more or less permanently at the inn and operate out of it. They guide licensed hunters on well-used trails. The guides have a deepspawn hidden in a forest cave about a dozen miles north of the inn that produces deer, boar, and bear for vaunted hunters to bring down.

If you get the idea that I'm not thrilled by the quality of the Trailswatch, you're right. Despite the snarling-headed pelts of gigantic forest owlbears and wolves that adorn every wall, floor, and ceiling of the place that isn't covered by a tapestry showing a king of Cormyr hunting boars, wyverns, and even lions from horseback in the deepest forest, it has the look and the food of an institution. Even the squirrels probably report back to Vangerdahast. Hmphh.

Hilp

This bustling town stands at the meeting of Calantar's Way and the Way of the Manticores. Hilp is named for a long-ago court jester of Cormyr who was granted extensive farmlands at this site. The town is a crowd of tall, narrow, slate-shingled shops with homes above them that keeps outgrowing its defensive walls and straggling along the two major roads in all directions.

It's a boring, business-bent place of grasping folk trying to gouge every last cop-

per out of customers and each other with nary a shop of interest save for two places: the Slipper Shop and Handiber's Stelk Farm. The Slipper Shop is run by a kindly old—and I mean *old*—elf crone who talks of Myth Drannor as if it were built yesterday. She sells cosmetics, herbs, scents, pomanders, medicines, and even magical potions (if asked nicely and properly) all packed in comfy embroidered cloth slippers.

The gruff, dry-humored Handiber actually only has a sale outlet in Hilp. His farm, where he grows stelk in three well-fenced fields, is at the edge of the woods nearby to the west. Stelk is a shrub about the size of a large man's fist and looks like a cluster of tiny brown or bronze cabbage heads. It is an oily, bitter, skunky plant according to the few humans who've tried it, though a few dwarf families have a frybread recipe that uses it.

It is, however, the best sort of fish bait going. All aquatic freshwater and marine creatures, from tiny streamflicker minnows to dragon turtles, love it. Coincidentally living things that eat it lose any capacity to generate or discharge electricity they may have. It's thus extremely valuable in the control of electric eels, as it has proven at Nesmyth to the southeast.²

Stelk commands high prices. The plants Handiber grows are staying effective in attracting fish longer and longer as he breeds ever-stronger varieties, allowing merchants to transport the stelk farther and keep it longer. Stelk grows on the shores of the Lake of the Long Arm and at a few other locales around Faerûn, but Handiber's crops, thought to have been transplanted by a mage teleporting from the Long Arm years ago, are the best and the closest to easy transport and large markets.

²See the chapter in this guidebook on the coast.



Some call Handiber the “Father of All Farmed Fish” and credit him with feeding and fertilizing many remote northern communities with fish transported from Dragon Coast net-fenced bay hatcheries. But I ask you: Just how excited can you get about a plant only fish love to eat?

Minroe

Before the gem lodes ran out and medusae moved in, this small village was a bustling mining center. Hidden in the foothills of the Storm Horns due west of Waymoot, it’s home to a few families who keep goats for the milk, meat, and cheese, and collect pixie cap mushrooms for sale in Suzail.³

The mountain caves and old mine delvings where the mushrooms grow were adopted as homes by medusae about 20 winters ago. Things quickly got deadly for the mushroom hunters and, soon after, for all the villagers. Various tactics failed to neutralize the medusae, until someone discovered that hedgehog shriekers growing in the deepest of the caves screech only when medusae approach. (Hedgehog shriekers are a species of the giant shrieker mushroom that are covered with sugary hedgehoglike fur.)

The ambulatory fungi are now carried along by Minrovan mushroom hunters, and most of the houses in Minroe now have shrieker gardens. These gardens are walled enclosures filled with aromatic rotting vegetables and dead fish mixed in the richest black river muck the Minrovans can bring in. A small freshwater pool is created in each of them, using magic to seal the banks against seepage, if necessary, and a stone

trough is installed and filled with a paste of crushed beetle larvae. Two or three captured hedgehog fungi are perfectly happy in such an environment and warn effectively of a medusa attack.

As a consequence of the hedgehog shrieker usage, the medusae are dwindling in numbers. Without human meals to use for primary sustenance, there just aren’t enough rock rats and cave snakes to feed them. The grisly vale of petrified villagers that used to stand west of the village is now empty; the remains were stolen by Zhen-tarim agents for use as spell components. There’s now nothing exciting about the smelly cottages of Minroe or the wary, always armed folk who dwell there, aside from pixie cap mushrooms and hedgehog shrieker fur. (The “fur” is now gaining favor as a dessert garnish on nobles’ tables. A little spread on a biscuit is a delightful treat.)

Plungepool

Ask most Cormyreans how many rivers run through the King’s Forest and they tell you just one—the Starwater. Foresters, elves, and a few Purple Dragons know there’s a second river, the Sharragh (pronounced “Sh air -a”). It rises in the rocky woodlands east of Espar, runs southeast through dense forest for several miles, and plummets in the depths of the earth at Plungepool. This well-like natural limestone shaft swallows the River Sharragh in an endless, spectacular waterfall whose roaring never fades. Mists always fill Plungepool, and a rich garden of ever-drenched mosses and plants carpet its slippery crumbling walls.

³Pixie cap mushrooms (sometimes known as fairy cap mushrooms) melt on the tongue and taste like buttery, nonbitter walnuts. Sun-dried specimens sell for as much as 50 gp each to gourmands and gourmets. For more on Minroe, see the Monsters chapter of *The Settled Lands* booklet of *Elminster’s Ecologies*.



The Sharragh's punishing descent ends in a free fall through the darkness of a hundred feet or more through the upper air of a gigantic natural cavern and into a vast underground lake. This is Lake Thalmiir, named after its discoverer, a half-elven explorer and miner of Immersea. The roiling violence of the falling water makes the waters of Lake Thalmiir rich in oxygen. The waters are home to many fish and to water fungi that glow weirdly in the dark depths. I'm told by recent explorers that Thalmiir in turn drains into another, deeper lake, Daerbraun, which is fished by drow who dwell in a subterranean city nearby and who consider Daerbraun their private territory.

Most travelers never see the wonders of Plungepool, but it's one of the most breathtaking locales I've ever observed. Be warned: Stirges inhabit the skypines that grow thickly around the damp verges of the shaft, and the shaft's slick sides make climbing down for a good look or to harvest some of the rare flowers and plants that grow so profusely here extremely dangerous.

Zundle

The now-vanished village of Zundle is marked only by a pump and a sagging, open-walled cowshed used by many travelers on the Way of the Dragon. The pump and shed stand on the west side of the road at the southern edge of the Ring's Forest.

I mention Zundle for two reasons. The practical one is the prevalence of garnets in the rocks here. Many an idle or poor wayfarer has spent a profitable day or two prying gems out of the rocks to sell them in nearby Suzail. Gemhunters should beware, though, since a mimic or other creature

able to hide has taken up residence among the rocks and begun dining on humans!

The other reason I mention Zundle is that it is famous—or infamous—in Cormyrean lore as the fabled home of dull-witted bumpkins. "A real Zundle party" is often used to describe a disorganized or boring event, dinner, or affair. "He'd cut quite a dash in Zundle" or "All the boys'd be after her in Zundle" are terms used to describe someone very dirty, disheveled, or dressed in ridiculous costume. "Are ye *sure* ye're not from Zundle?" is used in place of "Are you crazy?" or "Do you really believe that? Well, you *are* an idiot!"

The folk of Zundle are believed to have been a bit slow-witted. The village was ultimately destroyed after an unusually bright troll who'd mastered a smattering of the common tongue by eavesdropping on camped wayfarers convinced Zundle's lone cattle sentinel to douse his fire one night, since it was hurting the troll's eyes. The obliging idiot did so, and he was promptly swarmed by two dozen trolls. They didn't quite kill him in their haste to get on and devour the rest of the sleeping village. The sentinel fled to tell his tale, and the Purple Dragon patrol he met galloped to Zundle just in time to find a village elder obligingly telling the bright troll all the hiding places, cellars, and suchlike that he could remember while other trolls scrambled to check each one in turn.

Rumors have circulated that years later a renegade priest of Waukeen once buried a temple treasury he'd stolen from Westgate in a Zundian paddock shortly before pursuing temple agents caught up with him. But, in truth, this could never have happened, since after the trolls were slaughtered, the village of Zundle wasn't rebuilt.



Aunkspear

This village of 670 or so horse breeders and cabbage farmers stands atop and between a cluster of three hills northwest of Immersea, just off Calantar's Way. It's named for its most famous son, a long-dead common soldier who was born there, lived through many battles, and finally retired there. He gained fame for his laconic utterances such as: "Horses eat better than soldiers—and are issued more clothes to wear, too" and the widely known Faerûnian saying "Any battle ye survive is a great victory." Few folk, even in Cormyr, know the full, dry context of that last remark, which is as follows:

KING GALAGHARD III OF CORMYR: "Only three hundred of us left? What a disaster!"

AUNKSPEAR: "Nay lord, 'tis a great victory."

KING GALAGHARD: "A *victory*?"

AUNKSPEAR: "Aye. Any battle ye survive is a great victory."

Several Obarskyr kings came to admire Aunkspear's plain speech and fearless head in battle, and he became an unofficial battle general in northeastern Cormyr. Today his resting place is marked by a stone that bears his name, his arms, and an inscription. The arms were granted to him by King Bryn-tarth II and consist of a two-headed flying falcon and the motto: "I see both sides, and say so." The inscription reads:

*Here lies a man who served Cormyr well
And spoke with kings as a friend.
And when at last his death befell
He went contented to this end.*

Though it's pleasant enough to the eye of a traveler undemanding of amusements, Aunkspear may seem unimportant and unimpressive today but it was once an

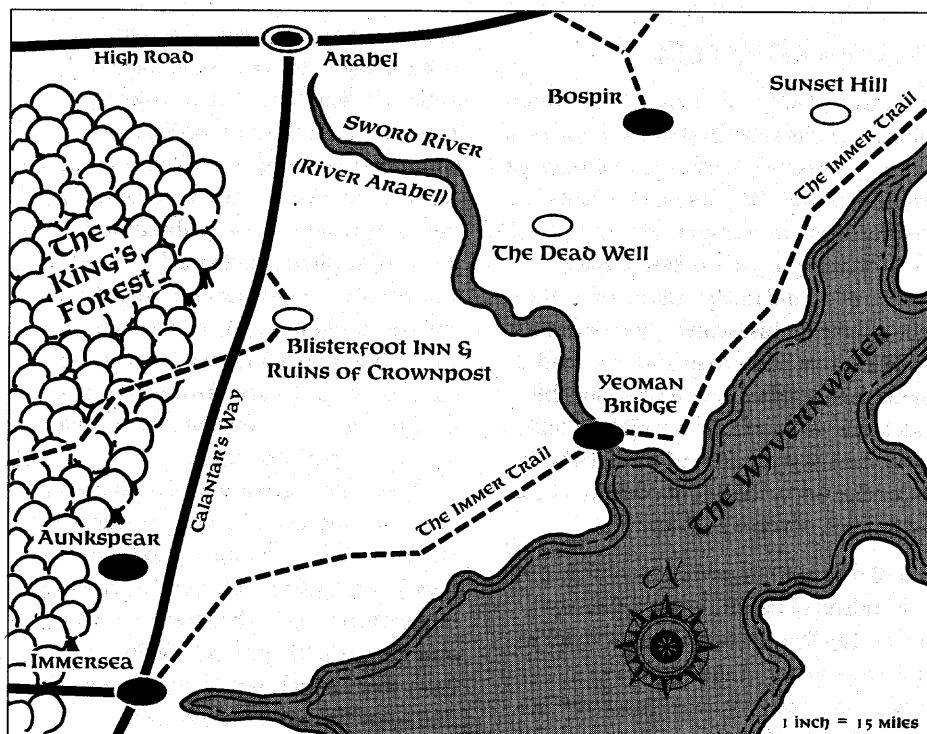
important place, though it was just as small as it is today. In the reign of Pryntaler, Aunkspear was the site of the royal mint. Jathos the Bold, the local smith, was empowered to strike coins for the realm. Just why this privilege was granted to him has always been a mystery, though court gossip of the time—and local lore today—whisper about Pryntaler and Alaethe, the smith's beautiful daughter. She never wanted for money and over the years had six sons who all looked like the king. To her grief, they grew up, went off adventuring and were never seen again.

When Jathos grew tired of slaying would-be thieves and too old to enjoy swinging his hammer all day, the mint was removed to Suzail, and soldiers took apart the smithy to be sure that no coins had been forgotten over the years. They found nothing, but every year in Aunkspear some fortunate folk find a few "free coins" when tilling.

The local inn is named after a lucky plow used by a local farmer that turned up buried pots of coins at least three times, allowing its owner to retire young and rich. That farmer Thallos Indemeir, died some 20 years ago under mysterious circumstances. He was found sitting in his favorite chair, pipe in hand, but his mouth and lungs were full of water, as if he'd drowned! No trace of his savings were ever found. The Indemeir fields, now owned by a close-mouthed farmer by the name of Chryth, are nowhere near the site of the former mint.

Alaethe also had a daughter whom she kept hidden after her sons vanished. That daughter, Crownhilde, later married into the Korvan family. Today the Korvan carpentry shop is called Royal Blood Carvers & Carpentry in her honor.

Aunkspear is also the place to buy gray



geese, if you've a mind to. Local breeder Ambratha Suren rears the largest, tastiest, and most heavily feathered such birds in all Cormyr. She also smokes a truly fierce pipe, and I saw her hurl a pranksome farm hand twice her size over a fence and into the duck pond with my own eyes!

Places of Interest in Aunkspean

Shops

Royal Blood Carvers & Carpentry
Carpenters and Woodcarvers



This sawdust-choked mess of barns and timber is home to the ever-busy eight Korvan brothers. They make adequate stools, chairs,

and chests, and whittle hideous little dancing dwarves as ornaments to be sold to the tasteless and given as gifts to the unwary.

Inns

The Golden Plow



The plow is an adequate roadhouse, though the roast goose is—as might be expected—excellent. The taproom is pleasant and serves good ale, but neither the atmosphere nor the drink challenges the eye nor excites the mind. The Plow is a good place for a restful sleep if you get lodgings at the back, away from the road. Beware taking southern rooms where the rumble of carts and other noises from late arrivals can be heard most nights through.



Blisterfoot Inn

This inn stands east of the grassy ruins of Crownpost, a fortified stable on the road between Immersea and Arabel. Crownpost was once a base for Purple Dragons defending the grasslands of the realm and later a staging stable for war wizards, king's messengers, and Purple Dragons riding Calantar's Way in haste. Here tired mounts were swapped for fresh ones and exhausted travelers could find a safe bunk for the night. Crownpost consisted of two rings of grass-covered earthen banks with a ditch between them and a palisade crowning the inner ring. The palisade encircled a well, a barracks, and stables.

The fortress was abandoned 20-odd winters ago after a violent lightning storm that may not have been born of natural causes raked it with repeated lightning strikes. The lightning burned down and blasted apart all the buildings to reveal hitherto-hidden iron doors of ancient and massive make that had been hidden in the stable cellars.

The doors led into a subterranean wizards' lair of vast size but unknown location—one chamber is linked to the next by means of *gates*. The lair was the home or prison of many enchanted creatures, and they erupted into Cormyr. Only a desperate whelming of the war wizards saved the realm from becoming a mass graveyard roamed by killing things.

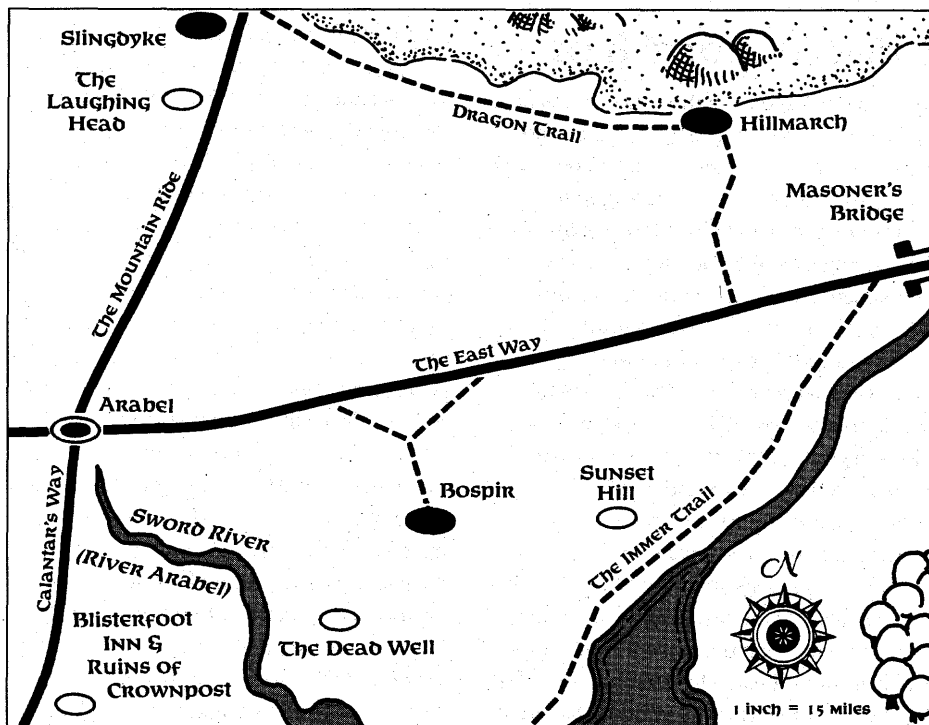
In the titanic battle between the war wizards and the enchanted creatures, the first known wild magic area in Cormyr was created. Its perilous effects govern Crownpost to this day, and strange monsters of all sorts roam the area. Flying chimerae seem to predominate, but all shapes have been reported. All of the creatures are able to

phase into or out of visible, solid existence.

The lair beneath the ruined fortress is so vast that after over 20 years of diligent work the war wizards have still not finished exploring it. A *staff of power* and a *staff of swarming insects* are known to have been brought out of this place by war wizard exploration teams as well as many chests of gems and gold coins to bolster the royal treasury. It's also confirmed that several war wizards perished in traps in the underground lair, though exploration teams are still sent down there every spring.

All of this has made Crownpost a shunned place. The farmer who owned the next hill to the east, one Buer Eltagar, hit upon the idea of opening an inn to house the traffic Crownpost had serviced and the explorers now coming to search the ruined fortress. Despite several lean early years, the Blisterfoot Inn has been a success. Its popularity took off after Eltagar journeyed to Suzail and Arabel to advertise it, handing out free maps with offers of half-price stopover bills to the first 40 mapbearers to show up at his doors. Today traffic on Calantar's Way hurries past the monster-haunted hill, warned by signboards telling of the raiding monsters and by numerous grave markers that show the fates of some who scoffed at such things. A side trail swings around the haunted heights of Crownpost in a wide loop and links the Blisterfoot Inn with the main road.

Eltagar's original inn was simply his largest and best barn, but the innkeeper has proved brilliant at promoting his establishment over the years. First, he gave it its memorable name. "Blisterfoot Inn" sticks in peoples' minds. Merchants from as far away as the Vilhon and even Amn and Chessenta who hear of it remember it. Next, Eltagar hit



on the map advertising idea and has since used more recent poster campaigns in nearby cities, portraying the Blisterfoot as a place at which young folk in love meet and frolic. Then Eltagar came up with his best promotional scheme ever. The farmer hit upon the idea of luring artisans fed up with the high costs of living in Suzail and Marsember to his inn by offering to build them free accommodation and give them free access to water and grazing land. Eltagar sold the artisans their shops for 1 gp each long ago but has always refused to sell any land to a potential rival innkeeper.

Over the years, a little walled village of artisans (silversmiths, potters, armorers, carpenters, and glassblowers) has grown up around the inn and attracted trade to it. Everyone who wants to do business with

the artisans stays at the inn and drinks at the Wizard's Pit tavern, which is run by Eltagar's sons, Orbril and Brendeen, and named for the dangerous Crownpost lair. About 80 folk dwell at the Blisterfoot Inn village year-round. At the height of trade season, minstrels, horse dealers, and porters show up and are hired on, and the resident population increases to 130 or so.

Eltagar's daughter Arlareene, posing as an agent for a variety of shadowy merchants (whom I suspect are all Eltagar himself), has been quietly buying up all the farmland she can around the Blisterfoot and using it to grow food for the inn. Not only does this bolster the inn's food supply, it prevents any competitors from building an inn, stables, or shops outside the village and undercutting the slowly



but steadily rising Blisterfoot prices.

In recent years Eltagar has been hiring mages of minor power to instruct him in the rudiments of magic with an eye to protecting himself. There are rumors that he's been making deals with the war wizards to defend his moneymaking inn. In return, they are to be given lodgings to use for covert activities such as the continuing exploration of the Wizard's Pit. I look forward with interest to see what this cunning man gets into next.

Places of Interest in Blisterfoot Inn

Shops

The Arrow in Flight

Bowyer and Fletcher



This tiny shop is the home of an expert archer, Shargla Quarraen, who retired from Purple Dragon service to become an accomplished bowyer and fletcher. Shargla works each day through, patiently making arrows from stock cut for her by half-elf partners. A visitor to her shop can almost always choose from several score of full quivers and a dozen or more bows of varying sizes and types. (A full Cormyrean battle quiver holds 21 shafts.)

Shargla defends herself with the aid of six enchanted *flying daggers*. One is sheathed down her bodice, and the other five are normally hidden among the rafters and shelves of her shop. They fly to strike foes at her silent mental command and have laid low several thieves over the years.⁴

The Black Bottle Pottery

Potter



This dusty shop is crammed with shelves of pots, jugs, and jars. Most are plain, sturdy everyday ware, but there are a smattering of fine-looking show items. The trademark black bottles sold here are triple-thick, almost-unbreakable belt flasks whose out-sides are sealed with a glossy black glaze whose making is a trade secret. At 1 sp, such flasks are a bargain. They come with corks and strips of sealing gum, as do the large transport jugs that are the shop's most popular items. Merchants buy the transport jugs by the hundreds for use in caravan trade of bulk wine and oil.

Three gnome families own and run this shop. The working head of the place seems to be a long-bearded elderly gnome by the name of Tharthose, but he is known to all as "Tar-nose" because of his large and dark proboscis. If you're offered a delivery date that seems too late for your purposes, talk to Tar-nose—and tell them Volo sent you.

Borgil's Bold Buckles

Bucklemaker



This tiny shop is the abode of Alam Borgil, a bucklemaker from distant Icewind Dale who never tires of telling folk how lucky they are to be in a realm that gets *warm* some of the time. Borgil's shop is crammed with buckles of all sorts, from bone toggles to elaborate, curlicued, metal cummerbund

⁴These animated weapons strike at foes Shargla concentrates on.

Flying Daggers (6): AC 5; MV Fl 21 (A); HD 1+1; hp 9 ea.; THACO 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1d4; SA can strike creatures hit only by +2 or better magical weapons (+2 to attack; no damage bonus); SD Shargla's control over them cannot be affected by any spell or psionic means; SZ T (6"); ML fearless (20); Int non (0); AL N; XP 65.



bosses that conceal tiny knives and coin purses. Alam and his large family make everything and merchants have taken to buying up fistfuls of his best buckles for sale in Sembia. As a sideline, Alam's wife Halya makes and sells tallow dipped candles.

The Crystal Wyvern

Glassblower



The Wyvern is a nightmare for clumsy folk to visit because of the breakable beauty on all sides. (Watch out behind yourself if you're wearing a scabbarded blade!) This cluttered shop has only one display, but it's a spectacular one: an exquisitely crafted and polished 3-foot-long model of a wyvern turns slowly and endlessly in randomly directed stateliness in midair in the center of the shop. The wyvern is magically levitated, animated, and lit by an internal blue-white glow. It presides over a workplace littered with glittering glass dust and fragments. Here Anablasker Thurim and his daughter Teska blow glass lamps, figures, candleholders, dishes, and hooded ovals that they subsequently coat with silver to make fine mirrors. If the Thurims pull on one of several fine cords, they can upend a cage of deadly glass shards on thieves who are leaving by the door.

Erik Longeye, Helms and Hilts

Specialized Armorer



The short-tempered, brilliant armorer Erik Longeye hails from the High Dale, where he developed speed and skill in crafting helms at his father's armory. He now—for

stiff fees—makes custom helms and personalized sword hilts. The sword hilts are fitted to finished blades brought to him.

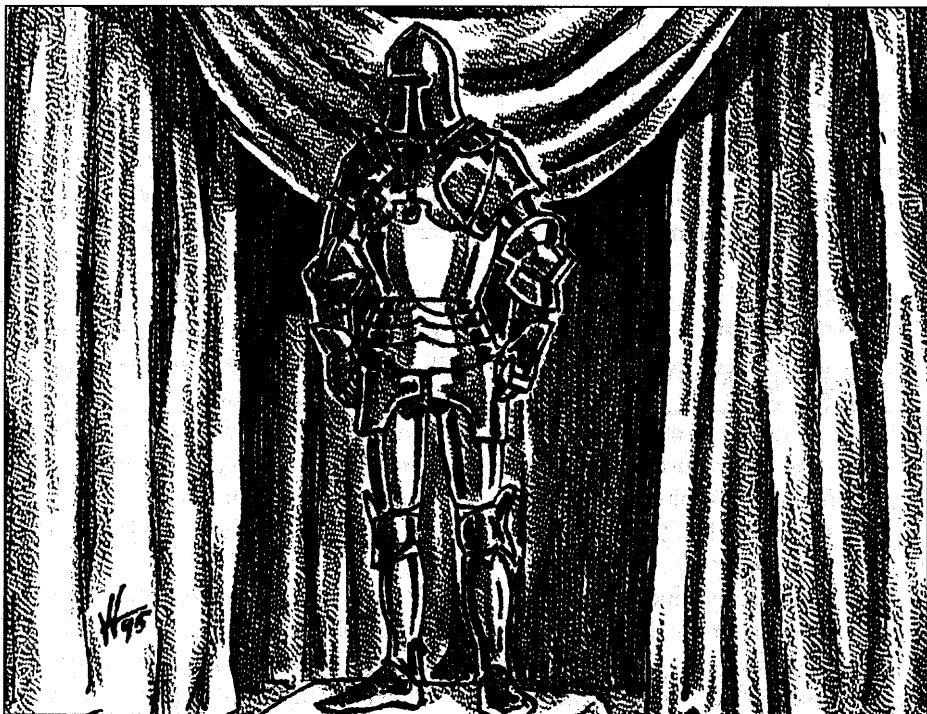
The nobles of Cormyr love Erik's work. The horns, wings, and snoutlike visors of Erik's helms are quite striking. His work not only makes an exclusive fashion statement, but since it features the badge of the noble who commissioned it, it makes the noble seem wealthy and discourages thieves. Erik gives the nobles swift results, his style is debonair and unique, and his work is not only fashionable but hard to dispose of if stolen. Where—in Cormyr at least—would you find a buyer for a particular noble's weapon?

Hornscars Armory

Armorer's Shop



This noisy, busy place is a traditional armorers' shop adorned with hanging suits of full plate armor that are widely rumored to be helmed horror guardians that Eldram Hornscars can animate with a single word. (He actually does so every night to leave them on sleepless guard.) A staff of a dozen smiths, most of them Hornscars's sons, is kept busy turning out shields, gauntlets, and body armor for the Purple Dragons, nobles, other customers who show up to place personal orders, and arms merchants active around the Inner Sea lands. The Purple Dragons have a standing order for a set number of pieces a year in accordance with King Azoun's preparedness policies for arms and armor. Hornscars work can readily be identified by the Hornscars stamp on each piece that looks like a pair of bull's horns. It's not cheap, but it is good work.



Jarn's Place

Woodcarver



A smell of fresh-cut cedar pervades this shavings-strewn shop. Here Ubargh Jarn crafts stools, beds, strongchests, and other practical everyday items, from crutches to buckets. He even does emergency wagon repairs out on the road or takes worn or crippled wagons in trade as partial payment for new carts and sledges of his own making.

Jarn has two stone sheds where his wagons and other large items are stored. He employs over 20 woodcarvers. Jarn's skill is comparable to the best workaday carpenters of Waterdeep and the cities of Amn. His specialties are finely finished hand-carried cases and stand-up wardrobes.

The Silver Feather

Silversmith



This tall, narrow shop boasts three floors crammed with silver jewelry, from tiny nose rings and snuff boxes to massive chandeliers as tall as a man. Many of the chandeliers hang in the center of the shop's central stairwell. One is a beckoning mermaid of breathtaking beauty and life-like appearance that I'd have in my own home in an instant if I'd 4,000 gp to spare.

Belert Massingham crafts all of this beauty on the premises. He specializes in pectorals for ladies to wear on grand occasions and in sculpted figurines of ladies in somewhat smaller than life size (which are usually affixed to newels to astonish—and in some cases scandalize—guests). Belert



protects his wealth by undisclosed means. I suspect that he's purchased an expensive *spellweb* or similar magic to link several wands that are mounted at various locations around the shop to his command so they can be fired simultaneously and without being touched by him.

Taverns

The Wizard's Pit



This rather dull, overly clean and bright tavern is divided into curtained booths. It is that rare thing: a drinking spot that it's safe to take prudish folk and small children into. A bored-looking trio of minstrels play soft background music ceaselessly to mask the conversations, and I swear the barkeeper slips sleep-inducing powders into the "last drinks" of overly aggressive drinkers to sink them into quiet slumber.

This somnolent atmosphere makes the Pit a great place to relax or to meet and talk business, for which purposes I highly recommend it. For hearing lively tales or gossip, enjoying a sing-along, brawling, or relishing the company of ladies who like evenings out, it's a disaster. I heard one adventurer say to another as they both left: "I felt like I was in a temple. Let's go somewhere where we can roll in the dirt."

Inns

The Blisterfoot Inn



Eltagar's pride and joy has come a long way since it was his best barn. Now it's a huge, recently built stone building of many shuttered windows, corner turrets,

and splendid canopied beds. *Glowing globes* fitted with their own pullcord curtains to darken the rooms for slumber illuminate the best rooms. Fireplaces adorn every third room, and the chimneys rise up the outside walls of the Blisterfoot like a row of stone spears.

The kitchens serve superbly prepared but rather bland fare. Roasts or geese accompanied by rice-and-sauce dishes that are heavy on the diced carrots, potatoes, greens, and mushrooms are a typical meal. I took refuge in the garlic butter and basket of hot crumbly rolls that's served to each diner. Expect no culinary delights and no disastrous meals and you won't be surprised.

You can eat in your room or in one of four small, cozy dining rooms rather than in a single cavernous common room. When I was there, visiting Purple Dragons had taken over one such dining room entirely, but I did notice that one of the other dining rooms held quiet, solitary diners and the loud and hearty were gathered in yet another.

The professional escorts missing from the Wizard's Pit tavern can be found here, on an upper floor of their own that's furnished with huge hanging red and amber candle lamps shaped like giant diamonds, lots of curtains, fur rugs, and large cushions. There are even two back stairs to allow guests to visit the escorts discreetly and a third that avoids the escorts' apartments and leads only to a private meeting room that can be rented (and the door barred) for long and sensitive negotiations. (There are rumors that the inn rents seats in a secret passage that allows eavesdropping on the meeting room for very high fees.)



Dhedluk

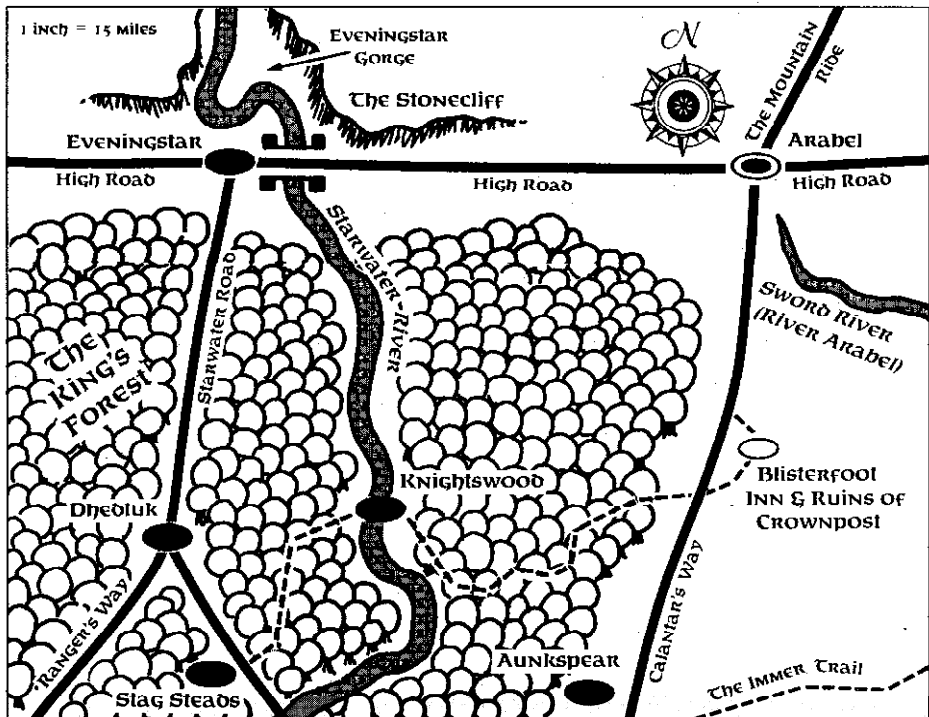
This village of 370-odd folk stands at the meeting of Starwater Road and Ranger's Way, a short trail through dense forest that links Dhedluk with Waymoot to the southwest. Some upcountry folk still refer to this community by its former name of Dheolur, which it was called after the noble family who once dwelt here. That clan no longer exists after siding against the Crown once too often. Dhedluk is the surname of a local woodcutter who stood against them and was made king's lord of the place in recognition of his loyalty.

Dhedluk today is a pretty place of log cottages nestling in the trees, tiny fern gardens, and small crop allotments. The

expansion of cleared land is strictly regulated (in recent years, that really means "forbidden"), and the village is surrounded by bogs, so Dhedluk remains a waystop community of skilled woodcarvers and herbalists. Three small quail ranches and another that rears imported boobries operate in the village. Some of the boobries wander freely around the village, keeping it clear of snakes and other vermin.

Landmarks

Most travelers know Dhedluk for its only visible industry: the Blushing Maiden inn. It's run by the affable if hard-nosed king's lord of Dhedluk, the retired adventurer Thiombur. I like to chat with the





man; he's always good for one more colorful tale about his days in the Fair Fortune Freeswords, who seem to have tamed most of Tunland and the Stonelands in their day—though both areas have regrettably returned to a perilous state since. Be aware, though, that every word said to Thiombur may find its way forthwith to the ears of King Azoun, Vangerdahast, or one of their agents. Moreover, I suspect there's a *gate* linking the Royal Court with Dhedluk. In several cases I've heard of, senior court officials appeared on the scene, seemingly out of nowhere, when Thiombur needed their authority to deal with rather antisocial Thayan and Zhentish trade delegations.

Dhedluk is truly beautiful, a place of dappled sunlight, flittering and calling birds, and gigantic trees girt with mosses. A lot of dreamy nobles and seasoned Purple Dragons alike seem to retire here. With the shortage of available homes, prices of cottages here tend to be higher than those of prime-location shops in Suzail—I've heard of small stone and timber huts going for 16,000 lions! Dhedluk's beauty also seems to captivate Cormyreans with odd ideas: It is home both to the Women of the Woods and a sinister underground cult known as the High Hunt.

The Women of the Woods are outlaws whom King Azoun tolerates and even befriends. They're under royal protection, but Vangerdahast has obviously issued orders that they be constantly watched and harried—in contradiction of the king. These women believe females should rule Cormyr and all realms. They have eluded the clutches of

locals, who long ago wearied of their raids, because they inhabit the ruins of Meliyekur's Magical Museum, a crumbling old manor house that was turned into a museum of magic by its last owner, an eccentric noble. It stands in the depths of the forest west of the village.

The Museum is protected by magical traps that levitate and paralyze intruders. Their motionless bodies float forever on display in midair, freezing in winter, rotting the following summer, and persisting as skeletons thereafter. One of the reasons the authorities tolerate the continued existence of this dangerous semi-ruin is that it gives foes of Cormyr something to explore. It has slain many a young and ambitious agent of the Zhen-tarim, the Cult of the Dragon, and the Red Wizards of Thay.

The Women of the Woods have made full use of the Museum's magical items, and at least one of them is a mage of some prowess. From a safe distance, I saw one bathing in a forest pool. When a Purple Dragon burst upon her with drawn sword, intending to capture her, she calmly crushed him with a huge tree that she uprooted and hurled with one wave of her hand!

The Women of the Woods steal food, drink, clothing, jewelry, and useful items such as axes, pots, pans, and knives during their raids on Dhedluk. It's thought they have a captive deepspawn⁵ in the Mansion; certainly the Women never lack for venison and don't bother to hunt anything. Purple Dragon patrols cautiously skirting the Mansion often report encountering the smell of roasting venison wafting through the trees.

⁵See the MONSTROUS MANUAL™ for a discussion of deepspawn.



The Women are at least two dozen strong and are led by Vandara “the Vixen” Thulont, a lass of wealthy Suzailan merchant birth who once loved Thiombur. The breakup of their romance drove Vandara to recruit other women dissatisfied with their men and found their woodland fellowship. The traveler is warned that Thiombur doesn’t take kindly to queries or talk about Vandara. Further, Purple Dragons regard questions about King Azoun’s relationship with the Women as some sort of secret of the realm to be sharply guarded! Is Vandara of royal blood? Is Azoun her *sire*, as well as her sire? I’d be interested in hearing from anyone who learns or is willing to talk about this matter further—in the interests of updating this entry for future editions of this guidebook, of course.⁶

The other notable outlaw organization active around Dhedluk does not enjoy royal favor or protection. The High Hunt is a decadent cult embraced by certain old families in Cormyr. It numbers some honored nobility among its members. Cult members firmly believe the vitality of the land can only be renewed by sacrificial slayings of Cormyreans of noble blood—at least one annually. A sacrifice need not be a willing victim and is hunted like a stag through the King’s Forest by the cult members on a moonlit night.

Such hunts traditionally begin in Dhedluk. To stop Thiombur and the Purple Dragons from discovering them, recent victims have been treated with *silence* and *repulsion* magics to drive them forth from the village speedily with-

out raising an alarm. In former times, more than one victim tried to hide in the village, and the hunt soon became a brawl through the night streets as Purple Dragons and travelers or adventurers roused from their sleep in the inn fought cultists. King Azoun outlawed the cult early in his reign, when it became apparent that certain unscrupulous nobles were using it as an excuse for murdering rivals. The severe penalties for kidnapping and confining nobles for any reason also date from this judgment.

Some High Hunt members use masks decorated with stag antlers, and the cult symbol is a point-down vertical dagger trailing three drops of blood off in an arc to the left. Fanatical cultists prick each other to draw at least three drops of blood whenever they meet on cult business, which is usually to discuss who is to be the next sacrifice. Travelers are warned not to consort with folk they believe to be cult members and never to let on they’ve seen any cult rituals or meetings. The first is a crime, but the second usually brings swift death at the hands of cult members bent on protecting their privacy.

Places of Interest in Dhedluk

Inns

The Blushing Maiden



The Blushing Maiden is the sole landmark of Dhedluk. This rustic wayhouse

⁶Before Elminster took an editorial cleaver to Volo’s original text, it was liberally studded with these not-so-sly references to later versions of the guide. Volo obviously believes in selling the same work over and over again. The Old Mage merely lifted an eyebrow and then winked when asked if Azoun might be Vandara’s father.



sprawls through the trees, its (sound-proofed!) private rooms offering breath-taking views of forest scenery. Each room has its own fully equipped bathroom as luxurious as those of some inns in fabled Waterdeep, and pelt rugs of (mostly) owl-bear and wolf fur are everywhere.

One of the long, dark passages in the inn has fully a hundred paces of one wall covered with a single huge forest hunt tapestry of exquisite workmanship. This hanging, reputed to be elven in origin, glows with its own enchanted light. Some folk say distant stags woven into the scenes move about from time to time. Others, the good mage Elminster among them, say the tapestry holds many *gates* to and from other places in Faerûn and even other worlds!⁷ These hidden doors are usable only by those who know how to evoke their magic and are accessed by stepping *into* (through) the weave at the right spot.

The Blushing Maiden is named for the now-dead leader of the Freeswords, the sorceress Aradaera “Ravensong” Tinshar, Thiombur’s first great love. Her phantom image—crafted by the best Sembian illusionists whom Thiombur paid over 50,000 gp!—appears in the entryway from time to time, dark-eyed and smiling, in a pearly gown that leaves little to the imagination of the viewer. In life, Aradaera was a fighting mage of great skill and even greater boldness, and she once fireballed her way into a beholder’s lair, coolly debated with the eye tyrant until her fellow Freeswords were in position to attack, and then charged the monster!

Aradaera’s nickname comes from her favorite alternative shape: a singing raven. She adopted it after seeing the Simbul, Witch-Queen of Aglarond, swoop into Azoun’s presence in raven form to confront the astonished monarch over a mistaken interpretation of a trade treaty between Cormyr and Aglarond. The Simbul explained her own view curtly, dra-gooned the young king into accepting additional clarifying wording on the spot, and departed, pausing in raven form to correct a minstrel who’d been singing all this while by singing the selection herself. Thiombur was also present at this incident since Aradaera and he were securing the Freeswords charter at the time, and he never tires of telling this tale. One awed servant told me that several winters ago he was telling it to a group of travelers when one of them said softly, “Aye, that’s just how it befell. You have a good memory and an honest tongue,” and then turned from the shape of a fat merchant to that of a raven, sang a snatch of song while Thiombur turned white, and flew out the door and away into the night!

Thiombur is good for more than stories. He knows the woods well and can direct interested guests to good berry patches and clear springs, warn them of dryad locations and where the Women of the Wood are most active, and even mount rescue parties if patrons request them before setting out on trips.

The Maiden is a good inn and justly popular. Many merchants take the Starwater Road rather than Calantar’s Way just so they can stop here and at the Tankard in Eveningstar.

⁷*Elminster*: Aye, this time he’s the telling truth. One *can* reach other planes, continents of Faerûn, and even locales in the Underdark. Elves did make the tapestry, but who they were and for what purpose it was made, none of ye need know. Like Volo, I’ve now said rather more than enough.



Espar

This village of 460 or so citizens is home to Stormhaven House, a secret college of the war wizards,⁸ but is known to most Cormyreans as the home of Quiral o' the Blades, a swordsmith of renown. Stormhaven House is a fortified manor house that stands overlooking all Espar on its own wood-fringed meadow plateau west of the village. Hippogriffs are stabled there for the use of war wizards and court officials, and the college is said to be guarded by both formidable creatures and by wards of deadly power.⁹ This college is where fledgling war wizards receive instruction in the history of Cormyr and its current problems and politics, practice the use of spells newly taught them and the magical items used by many war wizards¹⁰ (an astonishing number of which seem to have found their ways into homes and shops in the village), and are disciplined when necessary by Vangerdahast.

Few Cormyreans realize Espar is where the famous Battlestorm Beer is brewed by the aging brothers Thorl and Buirylagh Battlestorm. These two men see to the kitchens and cleaning around the college. Villagers refer to the college as the Brewery because they think the kegs of bitters bearing the Battlestorm name are the best thing it produces.

In recent years, a chance find by prospectors operating in the Storm Horns west of Espar created a rush of miners eager to hew emeralds by the cartload from the peaks and grow rich. Few found anything worth the taking, and their num-

bers attracted monsters that still roam the foothills, making this perilous territory for lightly armed travelers.

Landmarks

Espar is a quiet farming community that venerates Chauntea and Helm. Its local lord, Hezom, is a priest of the Guardian God. Sentinel Rock is an impressive shrine to Helm. The god's altar, adorned with a *sword of dancing* that animates by itself to defend any faithful of Helm who are present as well as all offerings left at the altar, is located in a cave in the heart of the rock itself. Pilgrims have been known to journey here to touch the *Vigilant Blade*, which won't attack a true worshiper of Helm, and ask for the god's blessing on their ventures, unborn children, and the like.

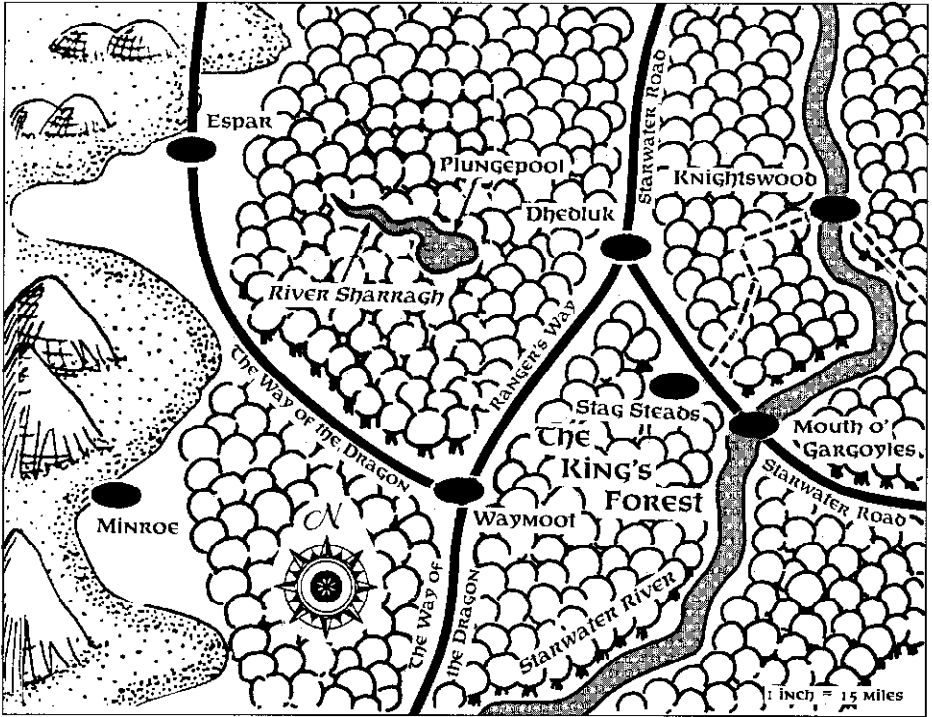
Most folk come to Espar to see the retired adventurer Quiral, who survived service in several adventuring bands—most notably the Company of the Bound Dragon—before settling here to a life of farming, reading, and crafting blades of outstanding quality. Quiral particularly likes the romantic novels penned in Amn and pays highly—up to 20 gp a book—for them. He can be found at his home, Everswords House, on a duskwood-cloaked knoll just west off the Way of the Dragon, at the north end of Espar.

Quiral's bladecrafting hobby, however, is what attracts most of his visitors. Before seeking his services, be warned that Quiral only makes a blade if he likes the person who wants it, if that person agree to Quiral's price and conditions for construction, and

⁸*Elminster*: Well, I guess it's not secret any more now, is it? (Ye dolt.)

⁹For some powers of Cormyrean wards see Appendix III. Previous guidebooks in this series have folly set forth the usual spells used to create and the usual side effects of wards.

¹⁰For more details of such items, please refer to Appendix III of this guidebook.



if the project interests Quiral. The prices Quiral charges are stiff: typically 4,000 gp and up per blade. He's mastered the *everbright* dwarven magic¹¹ and can prepare a blade to exacting specifications for a mage to enchant. Everyone who does manage to procure a weapon Quiral has made reports that the balance and weight are perfect, the weapon feels like a part of them, and they prefer his blade to all others.

Espar is also notable as the birthplace of several of the famous Knights of Myth Drannor, including the widely respected Florin Falconhand. And just as Espar was when Florin was young, the village is the home of many rangers, half-elfen folk,

and human elf friends, though the numbers of elves dwelling in the King's Forest to the east has dwindled steadily.

Another well-known legend of Cormyr few folk realize is associated with out-of-the-way Espar is that of the Four Floating Crowns. These are "four circlets of gold, bedecked with emeralds as large as a man's thumb"¹² that appear in midair above the Way of the Dragon just south of Espar at random times. Anyone who touches any of the crowns, which usually drift in a lazy circular orbit at about chest height above the road, vanishes. Legend says such people are snatched away to "far, strange, and perilous places." This

¹¹*Everbright* keeps a blade from rusting or tarnishing and also helps it keep its edge much better.

¹²This description is the in words of the now-dead sage Hurdver of Arabel. The quotation about the crowns' functioning that follows is also his.



gate resembles the work of the Sword Herald¹³ but is far older, and its origin and purpose are in fact unknown. Sages have written that it transports folk to a wide variety of locales in Faerûn.

One lady who fell afoul of this gate while riding on the road some centuries ago was Aglara Spurbright. That's why the minor noble family of Spurbright, whose 20 or so miles of small tenanted farms lie along either side of the Way of the Dragon just north of Espar, has a circle of four crowns at the heart of its arms.

Places of Interest in Espar

Shops

Ondrar's Scroll Shop

Scrollseller



This small, dusty cottage is the only shop of interest and value in Espar, though the village also features a smith of indifferent skills and some farmers who can manage wagon repairs for stricken travelers. The presence of the war wizard college explains this unlikely locale for a shop selling scrolls. Its proprietor, the old sage Ondrar Middlefast, was once servant to a powerful Sembian merchant family ere they offended the wrong rival and were speedily made extinct.

Ondrar collects all sorts of writings and sells them. In his shop, the traveler can find diaries of old Cormyr, spell scrolls, alchemists' notes, priestly orders of prayer, instructional chapbooks on everything from how best to cook an ettin's foot to how to make a golem, musical scores

from a dozen kingdoms, almanacs from lost and forgotten cities, old maps of the Dragonreach lands, and more. Ondrar gladly guides customers through the contents of his shop—and believe me, he knows *precisely* what's on every scrap of vellum or parchment in his shop. He can find it without delay, too. However, you must buy to read—period. There's no browsing without buying.

Thankfully, everything is fairly affordable, though Ondrar has little magic of any real consequence. Writings typically cost 5 sp per page, maps 25 to 50 gp each, and scrolls usually run 500 gp per spell or more. Spells of 6th or greater level are bought up by the college—to keep them out of the hands of honest folk, Ondrar often gloomily observes.

Inns

The Watchful Eye



Though the village is too small to have a restaurant or tavern, Espar is proud of its lone inn, which is a good enough roadhouse for such an isolated backwater. The name of the inn comes from the sign of the god Helm, and a visitors find it as orderly and careful inside as most temples to that god. It's also a trifle plain and sparse in decor, with plain linens, no tapestries or paintings adorning the walls, and simple, solid furniture.

The staring eye on the signboard ensures that the traveler won't miss the place. The stable care is superior, and the dining room serves too-bland but generous portions of good food. On the whole, the Eye is safe and adequate, if unexciting.

¹³See Appendix II of this guidebook.



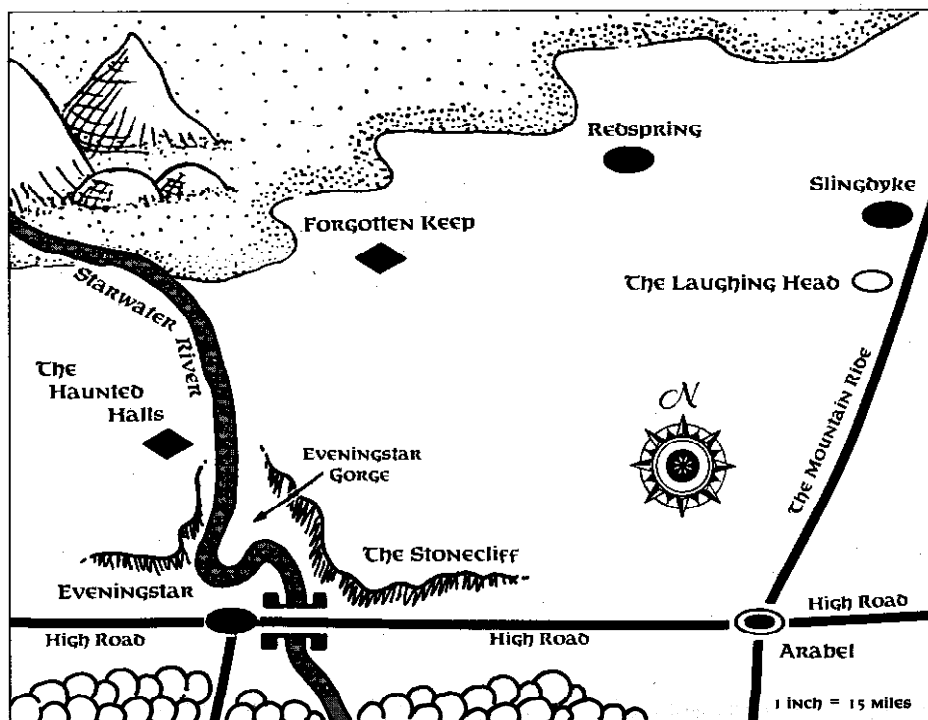
EVENINGSTAR

This picturesque farming village of 400 or so folk stands where the Starwater Road meets the High Road and the latter crosses the Starwater River by means of a broad stone bridge. Small and quiet, Eveningstar is a prosperous farmers' market and travelers' waystop. It lies across the mouth of a rocky gorge that carries the Starwater River down into Cormyr from its source.

The Eveningstar Gorge provides the only easy route up into the dangerous mountains north of the Forest Kingdom. It's the only major break in a craggy limestone escarpment that stands like a wall along the High Road from Tyrluk to near Arabel and bars easy northward expansion for Cormyr. There are many tracks and

scrambles up and down the Stonecliff, but no other routes by which mounted people or livestock less agile than goats and sheep can pass from Cormyr to the high moors of the Stonelands and vice versa. The gorge itself is thickly grown with thickets and scrub woodland and is the favorite playground of bolder local children, who in season pick many baskets of berries there.

Eveningstar itself is full of trees and gardens. The village rises out of the surrounding farms "like an orchard with buildings in it," as Elminster says. It is dominated by the Stonecliff and the prosperous fields of the House of the Morning, a handsome spired temple of Lathander that sprawls in the mouth of the gorge. No other temples or shrines exist in Eveningstar, but the local lord allows temporary shrines to be set up





in the market for up to three days (dawn of the first to sunset of the last). Eveningstar is one of the bucolic beauty spots of Cormyr, a place of soft, glorious sunsets and sunrises and gentle, starlit summer skies.

Eveningstar is ruled by Lord Tessaril Winter, a mage turned warrior who wields much magic.¹⁴ She is perceptive, considerate, and utterly loyal to Azoun. Some folk in Cormyr say she's a little *too* friendly with him, but although Azoun often visits Eveningstar when he wants to cast the cares of ruling aside for a time, I'm assured by senior war wizards that the time when Azoun and Tessaril were paramours precedes the king's wedding. These days they're just good friends.

Evenor farmers keep sharrada¹⁵ and sheep in the walled common land of the High Pasture on the edge of the Stonelands plateau. The farmers gather once every six days for a market, bringing produce that is often snapped up by visiting caravans. Eveningstar produces wine, parchment, wool, milk, cheese, eggs, poultry, mutton, beans, carrots, and parsnips.

The village is a favorite stopover for overland caravans. Most caravan masters are good friends of Dunman Kiriag, owner of the Lonesome Tankard, one of the best inns to be found anywhere. On many soft summer evenings, dozens of caravan masters can be seen fishing from the Starwater bridge, enjoying a pipe or two, or strolling the evening streets. Even more caravan guards are often seen bathing in one of the Starwater's swimming holes to drive off the dust and sweat of the road, then putting on their best and slipping out to the Low

Lantern tavern, dance hall, and theater for some late-night fun.

Eveningstar remains one of the favorite haunts of King Azoun, who comes here cloaked in magical disguise by Vangerdahast to relax. Vangerdahast usually accompanies him. The king enjoys a stroll, a quaff or two at the Lonesome Tankard, and an evening of dancing at the Lantern. More than once he has been moved to shed his disguise, usually upon finding Tessaril dancing, too.

The locals regard Azoun as a fellow Evenor villager with respect and affection. Zhentarim agents with poisoned steel once attacked Azoun in the Lantern but were set upon barehanded by everyone there. The patrons rushed to form a human shield ring around the king until Tessaril and her Purple Dragons, alerted by excited youths up past their bedtimes, arrived to rout the intruders.

Visitors used to the late or all-night hours kept in many cities are often disappointed to find that, except for the inns, the Low Lantern, and the temple, Eveningstar completely closes down soon after dusk. Farm folk hereabouts eat heavily and go to bed early in order to rise with or before the dawn and get out into the fields again. Many nap at highsun, making the early afternoon another quiet time in the village.

Landmarks

An oddity found on occasion in the trees and streets of Eveningstar are tressym: small, fluffy, winged cats. These cute, mischievous little terrors are semiwild and thought to be the result of long-ago wiz-

¹⁴She once pretended to be a man called Tessar the Mage.

¹⁵Sharrada are long-horned, hardy beef cattle covered with shaggy fur. They can survive in harsher cold than humans.



Eveningstar Map Key

1. The Lonesome Tankard (inn)
2. Eveningstar Hall (meeting house, Purple Dragon barracks for visiting forces, jail)
3. Ruldo Stables (horses bought, sold, rented; stabling space for the Tankard)
4. Market square
5. Ashnairn's Fine Clothing (shop)
6. Ebbard Highsong, Butcher (shop)
7. The Old Boot (wagonmaker and harness shop)
8. Residence of Auldo Morin, village clerk and purser (also Purple Dragon barracks for 9-man local detachment)
9. Tessaril's Tower (Lord's residence)
10. Orsborg's Adornments (home, shop)
11. The House of the Morning (temple to Lathander)
12. Temple Granaries
13. Temple "Home" Fields
14. Pillar Rock (local landmark; old tomb cave in base)
15. Redhand Pool
16. Deltar's Mill
17. High Pasture (common grazing land)
18. The Iron Hand (smithy)
19. The Golden Unicorn Inn
20. Baskar's Nook (print shop)
21. Mother Tethos/Cordials, Herbs, Gentle Cures (physic shop; local midwife)
22. The Low Lantern (tavern, dance hall, theater)
23. Tethyr Hardware (shop)
24. Tethyr's Court (rooming house)
25. Uldar the Potter (home and shop)
26. The Silver Branch (shop)
27. Olff's Rest (rooming house and carpentry shop; proprietor Roarel Olff)
28. Eveningstar Bakery (home and shop; proprietress Urda Malo)
29. Ruin of the Welcoming Hand (inn)
30. South stables of Ladian Ruldo (see 3)
31. Old Meg's Hut (ruin of dead crone's house; favorite children's play spot)
32. Eveningstar Gorge (route to Haunted Halls)
33. Residence of Syndair Thorn, Weaver and Dressmaker (also mage)

ardly experimentation. Villagers feed them and try to prevent the worst of their vandalism and aerial catfights, and the local farmers value their owl-like rodent control in the fields. Most of these flying cats lair in the gorge and hunt the farm fields night and day, avoiding local cats and dogs rather than fighting or tormenting them. A few mages have come seeking these creatures as familiars; Lord Tessaril has one.

Eveningstar currently features two inns, the Lonesome Tankard and the Golden Unicorn Inn, and two rooming houses. A third Evenor inn, the Welcoming Hand, burned down a decade ago and still hasn't been rebuilt. It was formerly Eveningstar's best—and best-known—inn. Its ruins stand across the High Road from the Lonesome Tankard, so visitors mistakenly seeking it won't have to go far to find alternative accommodation. One

rumor says that the fire that burnt the place down was caused by a fell beast from another plane summoned by night to the cellars of the Hand in a dark ritual. Other locals say the fire was caused by a careless manservant who shoveled live coals into the kindling bin when he was slinging ashes out of the hearth.

Of old, many mages dwelt near Eveningstar in the woods or in small, now-ruined towers or caves in or just north of the Stonecliff. Their spells and magic are still sought by many with high hopes. Aside from Lord Tessaril, however, the only other mage now living in Eveningstar is Syndair Thorn. She makes her living as a weaver and dressmaker.

Part of the way up the west side of Eveningstar Gorge is the entrance to the Haunted Halls, a subterranean stronghold built by dwarves long ago for the human





bandit-lord Rivior and since home to kobolds and worse. At least one adventuring band each summer comes to try its luck at gleaning treasures from the Haunted Halls; notably fewer stalwarts come to explore the Halls in winter.

Rivior was slain over 200 winters ago when Enchara, warrior-queen of the fledgling realm of Esparin (since absorbed into Cormyr), knowing Rivior's bandits to be short of food, tricked them out into the winter snows with a false caravan publicly rumored to be burgeoning with food and coins. Desperate for what they saw as easy pickings, the bandits swarmed from their lair and were slain to the last one. The deserted hold was soon home to monsters that were rumored to have been brought by evil Zhentarim mages who took up abode in the Hall to discourage intruders. The hold was often visited by adventuring bands seeking to win experience and fortune. The undead remains of some of these intrepid unfortunates gave the former bandit hold its present name.

Among the more famous tales of the Halls are the titanic battle between the young, unproven Knights of Myth Drannor and the evil mage Whisper. Exploring the Halls was the Knights' first real adventure. Another famous encounter played out at this site was the explosive confrontation between the Company of the Unicorn and a circle of nine levitating, fireball-casting, black-robed mages before the entrance to the Halls.

Despite continuing patrols, the Haunted Halls are still home to many dangerous monsters. The area near Eveningstar also has a continual problems with trolls, particularly to the east, in the troll caves traditionally known as the Caverns of the Claws.

Places of Interest in Eveningstar

Temples

The House of the Morning

Under the leadership of Patriarch Charisbonde "Trueservant" Belon, this wealthy and influential temple complex to Lathander farms and invests in the new businesses and bold ventures of others with vigor and enthusiasm. The 28 priests under Belon include the wary sarcastic Jelde Asturien, a retired Knight of Myth Drannor who serves as the temple's secular liaison. Among his other duties, he tries to uncover fraud and misuse of Lathander's bounty by keeping an eye on folk who've taken temple money to aid them in their ventures. Jelde and his fellow senior priests command several powerful magical items and a willing work force of 170 resident lay followers.

They run a very successful farm that produces herbs, nuts, plants for use in scents and medicines, and enough food to see to all village and temple needs. The temple feeds and houses guests of most good and neutral faiths for a nightly fee. Healing services are performed unstintingly, but the fees are steep enough to see the entire temple through a lean decade, not just a bad year!

Shops

Baskar's Nook

Print Shop



This dusty crowded shop (a former granary) in the back streets of Eveningstar is the home and shop of Baskar Lendo, a tall but stooped, thin, nervous man whose failing eyesight makes him peer at everything like



an inquisitive bird. Baskar is a sage in the field of the history, folklore, and genealogies of the heartlands of Cormyr. He is a great font of knowledge about Cormyr's past and has made a special study of the deeds and misdeeds of nobles and adventurers.

In his print shop, Baskar makes and sells inks and parchment and produces handbills for hire. A sample of one of his handbills reads:

*FOR HIRE: One Adventuring Band
Bold and capable.
No job too small.
Discretion guaranteed.
Proud of our charter!
Contact Thorl at the Low Lantern.*

Baskar also produces a broadsheet paper, the *Cormyr Clarion*. This single-sheet paper makes fascinating reading for the visitor. It lays bare the current gossip and doings of the folk of Eveningstar, from who's been interviewed by Purple Dragons recently to who won the last game of jacks at the Tankard. It also features both news of upcoming local sales and events and a rather salacious rumors column whose snide comments are alone worth the 2-cp cost of the *Clarion*. For a fee (typically 5 gp per message), Baskar slips false or cryptic messages into this column, enabling folk to tip each other off about things without revealing their business to all. A sample of this might read: "Randor says the silver-beak's flown from its nest at last."

Deltar's Mill

Grist Mill and Baker



Most northerly of Eveningstar's build-

ings, this large mill stands on the Starwater's west bank below Redhand Pool (the mill's millpond). The mill is surrounded by the house, vegetable garden, and grain warehouse of its proprietor, Deltar Tummarlin. He processes all grain and flour crops for surrounding farmers and bakes his own justly famous onion loaves. These foot-long, grub-shaped bread loaves are liberally spiced with groundroot, leeks, and onion. They're yours for 1 cp each, and they're best eaten with drippings while hot.

The Mill is also known for its ghost: It's haunted by the phantom of a noble lady drowned here long ago. She's given to following one man each night who's recently visited the mill. Dripping, she walks up to him, embraces him—reportedly a damp and chilly experience—and then says, "You're not my lord!" and vanishes.

Several subjects of this unusual haunting touch have said that they were aware of any undead around them¹⁶ for a month or so thereafter, and some also received useful warning visions. Why these effects occur remains a mystery, but Deltar, whose wife died a decade ago, refuses to have the ghost eradicated and becomes furious with anyone who attacks it or attempts to destroy it—though the ghostly lady seems to ignore such efforts from most priests. He says he's grown quite used to her embraces. (If no man comes to the mill in a day, she appears to Deltar.) No one seems to recall who the lady's lord was, but local legend hints that her death was foul play.

¹⁶By this, they mean the type, number, and distance and direction away of each undead creature for some considerable distance.



Ebbard Highsong, Butcher

Butcher



One of three shops whose rears abut the market square, this brick building has a magnificent facade backed by an almost tumbled down smokehouse. Ebbard Highsong is widely respected as a generous man whose skill is such that he can butcher and hang something as large as a bull in a matter of minutes. He can also identify all sorts of odd creatures from bones, a handful of hair or scraps of hide, and sometimes even a bit of meat. How he came to be familiar with mantichore meat and leucrotta livers is something he declines to discuss, but many adventurers and Crown investigators¹⁷ have found his talents very useful. Ebbard works like a fiend at spring lambing and the fall slaughter.

The Iron Hand

Smithy



This busy smithy is the abode and pride of Master Armorer Dhurthal Ironhand, a man of few words, mighty thews, and magnificent flowing blond hair and mustache. Dhurthal works quickly, crafting gorgets, greaves, gauntlets, and

shields when he hasn't orders to fill. Unless Azoun has whelmed a Purple Dragon army, he has a selection of such items for sale at all times. He's known for his gleaming *everbright* - treated plate armors, which are worn by many nobles of Cormyr, and his sideline: pewter pots. The pots are cast by his 'prentices whenever they've idle time.

At a word or sign from Dhurthal or any of his staff, several gleaming swords that hang high on the smithy walls fly to his defense. On several occasions, thieves who've tried to make off with these blades, even with magical aid, have been found dead when Dhurthal was nowhere near. Word is spreading of a possible guardian curse on the blades or on the smithy itself.¹⁸

The Old Boot

Wagonmaker and Harness Shop



This wagon-making and harness shop is one of three local businesses run by the fat, greedy merchant Arbold Tethyr. (He also has a rooming house and a hardware store.) Arbold's prices are steep, but his skilled workers can do *very* quick wagon or harness repairs and fashion a custom conveyance or harness rig inside a tenday.

Modifying an existing wagon for a new, per-

¹⁷Oh yes, Cormyr has investigators into crimes and murders, and very good ones, too! Lord Aramael is particularly competent, following in the footsteps of Lord Dlarsea.

¹⁸According to Elminster, the four enchanted long swords have only three properties: They fly at MV Fl 14, in random point-first flights designed to circle any heat sources—such as living things—they encounter, turning their tips toward such sources. They glow with a blue-white *faerie fire*. They also hum or sing at random times and pitches.

They are powerless decoys. The real defenders of the smithy are four animated battle axes and an anvil. These weapons strike at anyone Dhurthal directs them to. They fly at MV Fl 16, are +2 to attack, and deal 1d8+2 points of damage (battle axes) or 2d8 points of damage (anvil). They can be commanded to trace, follow, and strike any beings carrying or wielding a decoy sword (at +4 to attack). The swords draw the anvil and axes unerringly to their presence. All of these animated items are AC 0 and can sustain 33 points of damage before they shatter. The anvil can shatter into two smaller, remnants with 10 hp each that continue to function separately until destroyed. The anvil fragments each cause 2d4 points of damage per successful blow.



sonalized look takes them four days or less. Many merchants have grumbled at paying 25 gp for a minor repair or 40 gp for something a little more serious, but they brightened when the work was done overnight or in the space of a few hours.

Arbold wisely leaves his workers to get on with things, confining himself to the role of grand financier. His staff includes two men who are experts in the making of wheels and runners of superior strength and durability. One is also the acknowledged expert in fashioning new axles and putting them in place on wagons without unloading or destroying all the cargo inside.

For an extra fee, Arbold's employees create hiding places in a wagon by hollowing out small cavities in posts or boards in such a way that only someone who knows their whereabouts is likely to find them. Typically, an adjacent board or bar must be removed to reveal the niche. This service typically costs 25 to 50 gp per niche, depending on its size.

Orsborg's Adornments

Barbering and Tattooing



Vilnar Orsborg provides body adornment services to Evenor citizens and visitors alike. His shop is situated in a prime location between the Lonesome Tankard and Tessaril's Tower. The shop is also his home; he lives upstairs.

Orsborg is a fat, waddling, cheery man whose loud clothes and louder speech conceal a calm competency at money matters, barbering, and the application of tattoos with some artistry. His skill with the money he earns is surprising. He's grown very wealthy through buying

and selling property all over Cormyr, and he owns almost an entire street in Suzail. (My Harper informant declined to identify which one.) He has an amusing manner of accentuating every third word or so as if scandalized at its utterance: "So of *course* I had to *take* the man's *word*! *Ridiculous*, I *know*, but *what* can one *do*? I repeat, *what* can one *do*?"

Ask local ladies to show you their Orsborg adornments and you're likely to get slapped. Their husbands, however, proudly display their own smaller depictions of gauntlets, family arms, crossed swords, and purple dragons—and tell you about whatever of Orsborg's work their wives sport. Orsborg's work has smooth, swirling curves and vivid hues and has even attracted the attention of distant Calishite satraps, who send a few of their folk every year to be tattooed.

Orsborg is also an expert perfumer. He is often called upon to identify obscure scents by Purple Dragons, outraged husbands, and curious adventurers. He typically charges 6 gp for this service but refunds the money if a smell baffles him.

The Silver Branch

Objets d'Art



One of the shops on the main run along the north side of the High Road, the Silver Branch features a helmed horror guardian constructed only from the torso up. It floats above the shelves of merchandise to minimize damage.

This small, elegant establishment is a shop of quality that is increasingly popular with passing merchants looking for pricey gift items they can resell in Sembia, Iriae-



bor, or Amn. The shop stocks a wonderful selection of jewelry, art, glasswork, and fine silks from Mulhorand and locales even farther east. Among the jewelry, the delicate, locally made ladies' pieces of *everbright* silver, set with sapphires, are particularly nice. The art is a mixed bag. It seems to consist mainly of romantic paintings of gallant plate-armored Cormyrean knights hacking at each other or fearsome monsters at dawn or at sunset somewhere in a deep forest that sports crumbling ruins and a chained, shrinking maiden or two. The glasswork is particularly exquisite, though. Fluted blown glass pieces are the order of the day, and they are almost worth the 40-gp-and-up prices!

The proprietress, Amathaea Arryn, can identify most gems and fake gemstones at a glance. She and her two daughters make some of the jewelry and can skillfully retouch paintings to add a customer's face to a knight or blushing maiden figure, a particular charge of arms to a shield, and the like.

Syndair's Cloth Fancies

Weaver and Dressmaker



Some folk come to Eveningstar to learn magic. The village's only known mage besides Lord Tessaril is the kindly Syndair Thorn, who is also a weaver and dressmaker. She uses her minor magics to entertain and to tutor wizards.¹⁹ While she is not averse to short-term tutoring, she takes on no long-term apprentices. She prefers to make her living through her clothworking skills, and is locally renowned for her good eye for custom-

tailoring gowns and her ability to pick colors and shades that exactly complement the wearer of her designs.

Taverns/Festhalls

The Low Lantern



This establishment is a tavern, dance hall, and theater all in one, and it is often noisy and crowded enough that it seems to be a stockyard, too! The Lantern is run by the pretty and spirited Maea "Iron Eyes" Dulgussir, who apparently keeps some discreet magic to defend herself and the Lantern with. The place is popular because it's so cozy and welcoming, from the dark-eyed escorts to the crackling fires by the gaming tables. Traveling minstrels stop here often to provide music for dancers and melancholy midnight drinkers and often leave laden with extra coins thrown their way by appreciative listeners.

The Lantern is thoroughly enjoyable. If this place served any food beyond smoked oysters and overly salty garlic-buttered biscuits, and if it were a little less crowded, it'd be top-rated. It is a pleasant surprise for the traveler in such a small village. Lovers of wine should ask Shareen to show them the cellars. They hold some pleasant surprises, ranging from ruby-and-gold elverquisst to alurlyath from distant Undermountain. I heartily recommend an evening out here.

Rooming Houses

Olf's Rest

Tethyr's court



Eveningstar has two rooming houses:

¹⁹Syndair is a CG hf M5 and an informant to the Crown.



Tethyr's Court and Olff's Rest. Tethyr's Court is owned by the busy Arbold Tethyr and run by his wife and eight live-in maids. It is cheery and clean but unexciting. Olff's Rest is even less inspiring.

Guests can rent rooms at either house by the tenday or month for 1 sp per night, stabling included. No meals are covered in this fee, and there's no single-night rate. Travelers unable to get into the Tankard or Unicorn have to pay for a tenday even if they only intend to stay one night.

INNS

The Golden Unicorn Inn



This cozy, quiet, back-street place run by Selda Imyara takes the overflow from the more popular Tankard and is often used by nobles who desire discretion. It has separate entrance stairs for some of its suites that open directly to the outside, and it offers its own private stables.

Prices are slightly higher here than at the Tankard, and no provender is to be had beyond melted cheese sandwiches, ale, minted ice water, and house wine. But this is a pleasant enough place, quiet and luxuriously furnished—a hidden gem.

The Lonesome Tankard



This busy and at times overcrowded inn and tavern also serves as Eveningstar's

restaurant. Inside, it's warm and inviting in a rustic roadhouse sort of way. Most of the villagers gather here to dine every night or to chat over a quaff of ale later in the evening.

The Tankard's fame is increasing steadily as more and more caravan travelers discover it. It's famous as a past base of the Knights of Myth Drannor and the former favorite stopover of the Ring's Men when Azoun was a young prince-adventurer in that band.

The Tankard is run by Dunman Kiriag, a jovial, kind man who's deadly with a hurled dagger but seemingly a friend to everyone. Dunman has betrayed great strength from time to time: Regulars love to tell the tale of how he somehow sensed a brigand was outside with a crossbow. He raised a table to use as a shield just instants before a bolt burst in through a window, then hurled the table clear across the taproom and out that window to fell the foe outside in the night!²⁰

The Tankard has two floors of guest bedchambers, a rentable private meeting and/or dining room off the main taproom, and no stables. Dunman rents stalls in the stables due west, across the road for the use of his guests.

The Lonesome Tankard is an enjoyable—and very reasonable—place to stay in pleasant surroundings that is strategically located at the juncture of two major trade roads. As many caravan merchants have found, it's an ideal stop. Caravans can camp due east of the inn, across the river, and use the Starwater freely for bathing and watering their beasts. What could be better?

²⁰For more about Dunman, see Appendix I.



Immersea

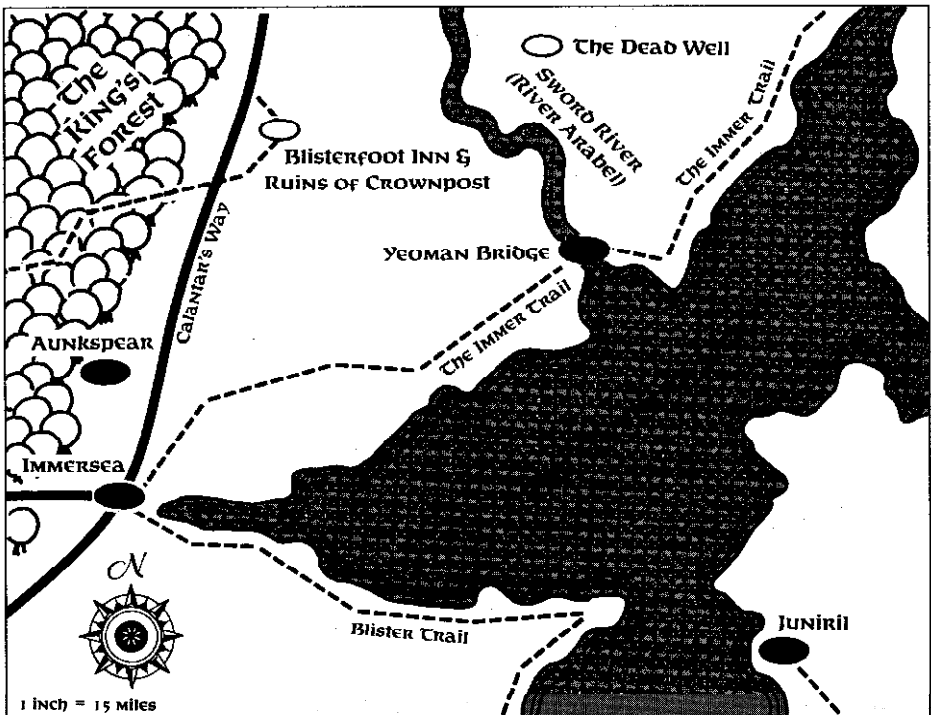
This town of over 600 folk stands at the westernmost tip of the Wyvernwater, at the head of what's generally known as Mist-fisher Bay. The bay had many many names over the years, most of them related to the spectacular sunrises and sunsets visible over the water from the town. Another popular name is Immer Bay because the Immer Stream joins the Wyvernwater here.

Immersea is a waystop on Calantar's Way, where livestock and beasts of burden can be easily watered. The Starwater Road, Immer Trail, and Blister Trail all link up with that paved way here. Immersea is also a fishing village. The local fleet of "mist fishers" fares forth onto the Wyvernwater daily

to catch freshwater eels, silverfin, trout, crabs, greenbacks, and other fish from the rich waters of Cormyr's largest lake.

Immersea is one of the few places in Cormyr whose citizens seem openly unhappy with their government. They are not unhappy with King Azoun but with his do-nothing, lazy overly cautious local lord, Samtavan Sudacar. Samtavan is a Suzailan investor and landlord of large holdings who spends his days fishing and reading old books in Redstone Castle, where he's been given his own apartments. His work is done by his herald, Geldroon, one of the most weary men I've yet seen.

Samtavan's inattention has made Immersea a somewhat free and easy trade town in recent years. Weapons are worn openly by some, Purple Dragons are rarely





seen in uniform—though they patrol diligently in plain dress—and local noble families finance and provide manpower for much of the work of street-cleaning and keeping order.

Immersea is the ancestral seat of the Wyvernspur noble family the Cormaeril clan, and the Thunderswords. The visitor is advised to respect anyone who looks arrogant, is richly dressed, or is clad in livery. Such people are probably associated with one of these three powerful old families and aren't to be crossed.

Landmarks

Immersea is shaped like a fan.²¹ It fills the Immer Stream valley as the valley runs due east and opens out to meet the Wyvernwater. Farms surround the town; sheep, cattle, barley and corn are major local products. The most built-up area of the town centers on the waterfront and the arrow-straight Starwater Road running to meet it.

An impressive stone statue of King Azoun III, armored and with sword drawn in the saddle of a rearing charger whose hooves are trampling a mound of dead brigands and foes, stands in a wagon turning yard behind the docks where the major roads meet. The sculpting of *Azoun Triumphant* is fine, but the eminence is much beset by incontinent local fowl. Azoun's statue is one of the favorite meeting spots in Immersea and is easily found by newcomers.

The other good local meeting place is Gaesthund's Tomb, located at the meeting

of the Starwater Road and Immer Street. Gaesthund was a local giant of a man who once lifted an excessively proud king of Cormyr up in the air and shook him. This caused a stir among the knights at hand because the king was on horseback. Gaesthund didn't bother to separate the king from his saddle and hoisted both horse and full-armored man into the air with a growl!

The resting place of this huge man is marked by a massive boulder that has been much scraped and scarred by the uneasy passage of poorly driven wagons. The boulder bears this charming inscription:

IMMERSEA EARTH LIE HEAVY ON GAESTHUND, FOR HE
IN LIFE LAID A PASSING HEAVY LOAD ON THEE.

Immersea is an important stopover and boasts many rooming houses and provisioning shops. The most popular of its inns are the pricey Immer Inn and the more casual, but better, Five Fine Fish. The Five Fine Fish is the home of Elminster's Choice, a dark, bitter, smoky beer brewed there almost daily.²² Its reek often fills the place and can guide even a hopelessly lost traveler to the inn door.

The most prominent local building is Redstone Castle, the lofty castle of the Wyvernspurs. It is a fortified sandstone manor house perched on a high hill just south of town. It frowns down over Immersea from among its wooded lawns, its geographic prominence making it seem far grander than the larger,

²¹A map of Immersea can be found in the revised edition of the FORGOTTEN REALMS *Campaign Setting* box in the chapter on Cormyr or in the *Cormyr* game accessory.

²²*Elminster*: I've forgiven the impudent wretch who was so bold as to borrow my good name for his second-rate ale. Eighty years as a stone toadstool is enough, I think. He sees things my way now and even lends a hand with things better not spoken of, but don't make the mistake of believing I prefer this stuff. Never serve it to me unless (a foolish tactic, to be sure) you mean to insult me.



taller, many-towered pile of High Towers, the Cormaeril family home, which stands on a lower hill due east of it.

The seat of the third noble family Thundersword House, is southwest of the Wyverns spur lands and hence remote from the town proper. It is newer and larger than either of the other castles but dominates only its own small valley surmounting a small knoll at the heart of the wooded basin.

Interestingly the sons of both the Cormaerils and the Thunderswords all closely resemble King Azoun. All of them have also been quietly approached in their youths by veteran Purple Dragon officers who made them handsome offers of career sponsorship in the army ranks! Save for a few who tried adventuring careers, all of the lads accepted. Most remain in service to this day, posted all around the edges of the realm. More than one local citizen has remarked how curious it is that so many lads look just like the king and yet never see anything of the realm closer to Suzail than Immersea itself! I leave readers to their own conclusions on this delicate matter of state and continue my survey of Immersea's sights.²³

Prosperous farms and close-crowded townhouses are the order of things in Immersea. Growing things are valued—flowering vines are everywhere—and the mists keep everything lush. The wooded height of Spring Hill, where the Immer Stream rises, is just west of Redstone Castle. It is adorned with both a beautiful series of cascades, known as Selûne's Stairs, and the House of the Lady, a temple to Selûne.

West of that height is the wooded eminence of Graveyard Hill, topped by the

Wyverns spur Crypt. The hill holds a complex network of catacombs. Brazen adventurers and thieves took to trying to loot the tombs so often that guardian spells and magical devices were installed. Visitors are advised to look upon the crypt gates from afar unless accompanied by a family member.

Places of Interest in Immersea

Palaces

Redstone Castle

This small, diamond-shaped fortress consists of a gate house, two outlying end towers, and the main manor house. The gatehouse contains stables, a carriage shed, a barracks used to house the watch contingent under the command of Lord Samtavan (and a private army in the younger days of the realm), dungeon cells, an armory, and granaries.

The seat of the Wyverns spurs is a two-story house with a full basement below that is given over to servants' quarters. The house is surmounted by a tower with another four floors. It contains a many-pillared reception hall big enough to hold the entire population of Immersea and still allow one to hold archery contests!

To see this grand house, one has only to arrive and ask for an audience with the lord. While waiting for the servants to find or awaken the lord, the visitor can admire Samtavan's collection of fishing rods.

Temples

The House of the Lady

This open-air temple is a clearing in the

²³*Elminster*: Azoun has always been concerned about making proper opportunities available to other noble relatives in his family tree—if ye know what I mean. He remembers with fondness the fruitful and carefree days of his adventure-filled youth and feels that other noble youths should be given the chance for such glorious martial pastimes.



duskwoods and shadowtops that is ringed by an unbroken, circular stone seat graven with many prayers to the goddess. At the center of this ring stands a stepped pyramid whose every stone is carved with a prayer. The pyramid is topped by a large statue of Selûne. The statue depicts the goddess as two back-to-back women: a dusky-skinned, white-tressed maiden and a matronly middle-aged woman.

The temple is tended by a priestess of Selûne, a middle-aged, kindly woman named Mother Lledew. She's a skilled stonecarver; the temple is her creation. She dwells in a cell-like stone-lined room under one edge of the ring. Her room opens out onto the hillside below, and there's a stark stone room beside hers for visitors. The guest room is fitted with its own hearth and chimney. Mother Lledew keeps firewood ready near the guest chamber's chimney and a spring seeping through one wall provides visitors with drinking water.

Shops

Immersea's shops hold a bustling array of weavers, netmakers, cordwainers, coopers, cratemakers, and hardware resellers who cater to every possible need of the traveling merchant. All of their shops are useful, unlovely places littered with broken crates, handcars, and broken crockery. Everyone always seems to be too busy to tidy anything away, though there's a fence of trash along the north edge of the High Common, the grazing fields on the northern edge of town that are left for the use of visitors. Exceptional among local establishments are the following:

Alzael's Cleaver Slaughterhouse



This local slaughterhouse ends the life of many a cow and ewe. Alzael wields an expert cleaver and has both shearers and smokers on staff. He can convert an animal to bailed wool and smoked meat for a customer or buy the beast outright and send the results on to other local businesses. When King Azoun whelmed an army to fight the Tuigan Horde, Alzael slaughtered 600 cows in one day and over 400 on the next to get the meat hung in time for army quartermasters to pick it up and take it with the armed host. That feat earned Alzael the local title of "Thousandslayer" and made his name known in Sembia as well as all across Cormyr.

Alzael's trade has flourished since then. He's bought an entire pig farm, and folk now travel to Immersea just to get a wagonload of his aged, smoked hams cured in cherry brandy. A wagonload is enough to last a year and have some to sell to one's neighbors.

Alzael, a beaming giant of a man with a nose that has been broken many times, loves his new-found wealth and dreams of being ennobled by a respectful king someday soon. Women who think their daughters would make the perfect mate for such a successful man have rapidly become numerous, and Alzael is quite willing to consider the merits of each prospective mate. None of the candidates who have shown up yet swing a cleaver to his liking, though, so if you're a comely wench with a good sharp blade, a keen eye, and a strong arm . . .



Chalasse's Fine Clothing

Clothing Shop



The lovely Chalasse is a graceful, soft-spoken woman almost 7 feet tall! Her height has made her a shy outcast, but in truth she's so beautiful that I've seen young nobles literally lose their breath at the sight of her. She grew up in Suzail and always loves to hear news of what's happening there.

She runs a shop full of fine gowns, sashes, cummerbunds, pantaloons, half-cloaks, gem-bedecked hose, ruffs, slashed-sleeve tunics, and similar garb for the richest and haughtiest folk.

She tries to bring in the latest fashions from Sembia and Suzail as swiftly as her buyers can send them, and locals and passing nobles alike are beginning to notice the selection she offers. After years of scraping by, this huge woman looks to be on the road to riches at last.

Chalasse has also begun to deal in secondhand finery because so many Immer women just can't afford her wares. Some Suzailans bring in their wives' discards to sell off for a quick handful of coins as they travel through the town, and Chalasse always persuades them to pause a moment to give her news of her childhood home.

Chalasse's purses have been filled for her over the years by two adventuring bands who looked upon her shop as a good investment. She can call on their aid by some secret magical means if robbed or attacked. They come to help her with all due speed because they've hidden substantial sums of coinage in and around Immersea, and she knows where some of it is. Thieves be warned!

Nelzol's Notions

Hardware and Modes of Transport



This sprawling barn (well, former warehouse actually) of a hardware shop deserves mention here because it boasts a huge selection of goods: wagons, closed coaches, sleighs, and even boats stand ready in various corners of the shop. The visitor with coins enough can literally buy a ship to sail across the Wyvernwater to build a house and fill the ship with every last thing needed to do the building!

From kettles to ladders, rope to coils of fine wire, kegs of nails to kegs of pitch paint, this is the place that has everything in stock. Want a siege ladder? Several can be found here; name your preferred length. Would you like to arrive in Suzail in a grand coach? Name your preferred color, seating capacity and number of horses to draw it. Would you like a barn erected overnight? A ready-to-be-assembled structure awaits you on its own cart with roof trusses and wall panels preassembled. Simply drive in the support posts, link them with the pre-cut beams, raise the structure, and apply the shingles. With a crew of four or more, it can be done in a day!

Nelzol's isn't cheap, but it really does seem to have everything needed for building things or going places. It's a must-see shop.

Taverns

The Horn and Spur



This is a welcoming, easygoing sort of family drinking house, well lit and clean, with a quiet atmosphere and discreet booths at



the back for those who wish to meet for romantic purposes or to talk business. The horn from the tavern's name is a giant rack of peryton antlers over the bar, and the spur was a famous local stallion whose stuffed head now stares down impassively at diners with eternal calm.

This is a great tavern in which to relax and watch visitors and nobles drop in. Some of the Cormaerils and Thunder-swords, I'm told, come here regularly in their finery to dine and drink. They then go down to the Runner to get drunk and enjoy a good tussle with their own farmhands.

The Mist Runner



This sparsely furnished, well-worn dock-side establishment is where the fisherfolk come to drink and engage in fisticuffs. The windows no longer have any glass, just shutters, and the tables are nailed securely to the floor to prevent them from being hurled—well, most of the time.

Named for the local term for a smuggling ship,²⁴ this tavern is only safe for those who can defend themselves and know how to avoid having to do so. Others—finely clad visitors in particular—are directed to the Horn and Spur instead.

Rooming Houses

The House of Nets

Maela's Rooming House

Nulahh's Rooming House



Besides its inns, Immersea also has many rooming houses, most offering rates for a

three-night stay, a tenday, a two-month "stretch," or a four-month "long stretch." They're very much alike and have nothing to either recommend them or cause me to warn visitors away from them. All are large converted houses. The best-known, perhaps, are Maela's, Nulahh's, and the House of Nets.

INNS

Five Fine Fish



No longer a true tavern, this wayhouse now serves only its own beer, and that only with meals. The dining room has taken over the former taproom, and rowdy drinkers are encouraged to go elsewhere.

This change of services has made the low-priced Fish the stopover of choice for families, the timid, and those carrying valuable and breakable goods. Its trade has soared, prompting two expansions of the inn in the last three years. Gables have been added fore and after, a new wing has been built, and the stables have been doubled in size.

The Fish is vastly improved over its state when I first knew it, two decades ago. Expensive but permanent breeze-making spells have driven both chimney smoke and the smell of hops out of the inn to drift through the rest of town. The Fish's beer is an acquired taste, but the food is steadily improving. The inn sports a menu lacking in surprises and devoted mainly to fried fish in various sauces and roasts in gravy with potatoes and greens. Nevertheless, with the

²⁴Such smuggling ships have not seen use since the long-ago days when the lands to the east were separate kingdoms. Then, a ship on the Wyvernwater could make a hefty profit evading taxes with runs of spirits one way and pelts in the other.



ongoing improvements in atmosphere, fare, and service, I recommend the place.

Halaband's Inn



Halaband's is the least-known of Immersea's inns. It's a dark, drafty old place of gray-haired servants and fine old wood paneling. Its dining room offers a wider selection of food than the Fish. This is a good thing, because the place is otherwise a sad second to its better-known competitor. Everything's broken and mended or very well-used, and if you dress warmly or go in the hot days of summer, you can appreciate the comfortable feel of the place.

Halaband's offers suites suitable for large groups of travelers. The inn's founder, long dead, was an adventurer, and he built this place as a base. One interesting feature of the inn is the array of halfling-sized laundry chutes that slope from each floor to the basements. There's also a dumbwaiter that takes hot food from the kitchens to each floor. Bells are rung to herald the arrival of the

viands—and to drive off the bats that like to ride on the dumbwaiter itself.

The staff can recommend local escorts and other locals who provide in-room service performing massages, tending to one's pedicure or manicure, or dressing one's hair. Halaband's provides adequate accommodation, but could be improved.

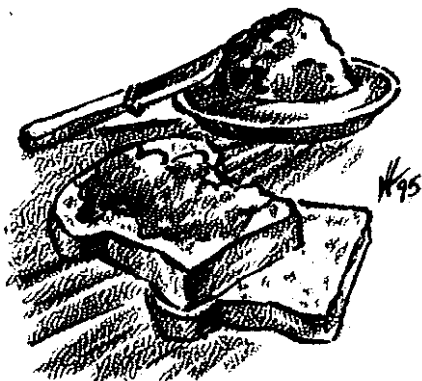
The Immer Inn



The most snobbish and overpriced of Immersea's inns, the Immer Inn is a place that has to be seen to be believed. It's a former manor house that's been 'improved' with gilded columns everywhere and hanging brass pots bristling with ferns. Carved ki-rin wind charms and little plaster trumpet-bearing sprites have been worked into every corner. In short, the place tries to look like a palace.

The Immer's wine cellar is superb, the ales less so, and the kitchens here specialize in inventive things done to fish (trout stuffed with cheese? *Why?*) and in various seasoned sorts of cheese. Guests each have a personal server who waits on them for three meals daily if they wish to partake of food, and there's a pair of chambermaids on each floor that one can ring for if any need arises.

There are no single rooms at the Immer Inn. All suites have a bath chamber and receiving room linked to a wardrobe off of which opens either one or two bedrooms. Each receiving room has its own fireplace and window. The rooms are very nice and utterly soundproof. With the doors closed, you never know you aren't alone in a private residence. All this luxury, however, easily costs upward of 30 gp per night. Ouch.





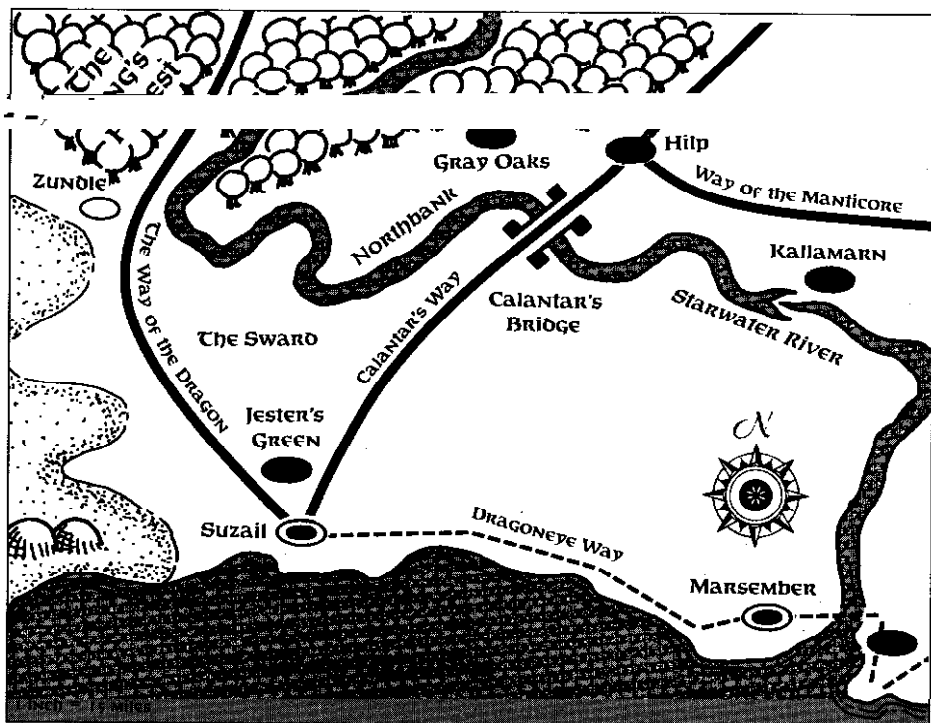
Jester's Green

This village of about 600 merchants stands just north of Suzail. It's named for an inn that once stood at its center and burned down long ago, killing the innkeeper. The innkeeper was known as the Jester; he was a rogue wizard who defrauded one too many guests with his magic and was destroyed by a *meteor swarm* hurled by a Red Wizard of Thay traveling in disguise.

The Green, a huge caravan campfield serviced by the inn, survives. It has become the traditional mustering camp of the militia and the marshaling ground for any army called up by Cormyr. It's bordered by permanent Purple Dragon barracks. Among the barracks, an open-

air market has been permanently set up for the convenience of the troops. Once a tenday, a horse auction is held on the Green. Breeders bring their stock here so that citizens of Suzail, country folk who can get to the Green without enduring the crowding and prices of Suzail, and the soldiery can all bid on the horses, guaranteeing good prices.

If you've got something to sell that warriors would want to buy, this is the place to come. The deceitful are warned that the troops dispense their own rough justice to those who cheat them. A Zhen-tarim agent once tried to decimate the defenders of Cormyr by selling poisoned wine here, and a war wizard inspector discovered this before anyone even fell ill by using poison detection magic. The





unfortunate Zhent was literally torn apart by furious soldiers! (The inspector was part of a regular duty detail; poisoners and wine vendors are hereby warned.)

Places of Interest in Jester's Green

Gambling Houses

The Lucky Dragon



This dimly lit establishment rents out chairs at its gaming tables for 1 gp per hour; the time is governed by an intricate water clock that chimes at the top of the hour. Drinks of bad ale and worse wine served in generous clay cups are 4 cp per fill. Bets and the company of a few local lasses who cruise the place seeking to comfort and escort weary gamblers are, of course, extra.

Purple Dragons play at half price in the Lucky Dragon. Some of the more popular games played in this house and elsewhere in Cormyr, especially where Purple Dragons are stationed, are described in the pages hereafter, in a short essay of mine on games.

Shops

The stalls in the market change rapidly, but Jester's Green does have a few shops of interest:

The Flame of Love Lutery

Lutes and Romantic Trinkets



Yes, this crammed shop does offer lutes, but it also sells love poems for smitten soldiers to send or declaim to their light-o'-loves as well as scented candles, lingerie, magically preserved flowers, keepsake gifts, "from a secret admirer" notes, bottles of wine, racy broadsheets, and er, indiscreet romantic pictures. *The Maiden Said Maybe*, *High Ladies in Love*, and *The Elf Maiden and the Unicorn* are a few of the broadsheets for sale. These masterpieces go for 1 sp each. The romantic pictures are priced from 1 sp to 10 gp; most are 6 sp.

The Old Codpiece Arms & Armory Armory



Named for the fearsome protuberance on a fat old suit of armor reputed to have once belonged to Dhalmass the Warrior King, but more likely once the property of the "Old Boar," his stoutest baron, this shop is crammed with arms and armor. Over a dozen complete suits of armor stand among the goods, and thieves are warned that both magically animated *flying daggers* and battle horrors capable of flight guard the place against thieves.

Secondhand arms and armor are what this shop deals in. The proprietors buy at half price (or less if the condition of the goods is terrible) and sell at two-thirds to three-quarters the going new price. For instance, a short sword is typically 6 or 7 gp. Note that the three old dwarves and six retired Purple Dragons who run the place are expert at hurling weapons at any spot in the shop.²⁵

²⁵Consider them +3 to hit when throwing any weapon in the shop. All serve as eyes and ears of the war wizards; loose talk among patrons is reported to the authorities.

Games of Chance

Many similar games of chance and shady skill are played across Faerun. Knowing subtle differences of etiquette and play from place to place is an essential survival skill for travelers. Here are three gambling games played in Cormyr alongside chess and more familiar card and dice games.

Toss The Dagger

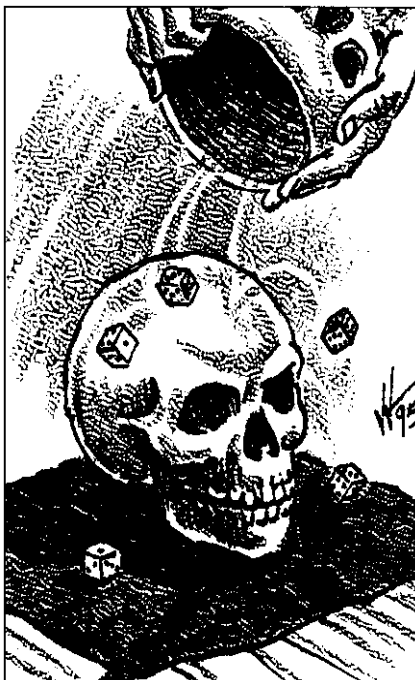
Played in cruder ways elsewhere, this game gets the full treatment at the Lucky Dragon: Two daggers are thrown upward simultaneously by a blindfolded maiden, who then steps back. She hurls them up into a hanging forest of old scraps of armor, fragments of blades, and the like that dangles from the ceiling on cords and chains. Both daggers must strike something on their upward trip or both must be thrown again. The floor of the throwing area is made of damp sand.

Players bet on whether one, both, or none of the daggers will strike point downward when they reach the ground. Bets are placed before the daggers are thrown and continue until only one player can afford to continue or (by prior agreement) for six, seven, nine, or twelve bets.

Traitor's Heads

Five dice are shaken inside a skull and then dropped out of it onto a second skull that has been placed on a large dark cloak or velvet cloth. To count, a die must strike the second skull and come to rest on the cloth. Dice that miss the skull or roll off the cloth must be shaken and dropped again.

Casting the dice alternately, players seek to reach an exact total. Doubles, triples, and quartets can be taken at face value or rerolled at the caster's choice. One die or both may be rerolled in the case of duplicates, but if



The player chooses to reroll a triple or quartet, all of the matching dice must be rolled. Any casting where all five dice land displaying the same number wins the game instantly.

Bets are placed per game and sometimes modified by the number of rolls required to achieve the target total. Players who go over the needed total (usually 36) get a free roll of all five dice and drop from their over-total the number of points the dice show. Thereafter, they take their turn casting a single die only. When they approach the needed total, all rolls that take them over the total again are ignored, and they must continue to roll in their turn until the exact total is met.

Swords and Shields

This card game is played with two identical decks that may be of any sort, so long as they have at least 20 cards. One player chooses a single card from his or her hand and puts it face down

on the Table. The other player puts an array (called a Tableau) of 20 cards face down on the Table with a coin atop each one. One of these cards must be the second player's king or dragon or crown card, depending on what deck is used. (The sole top-value card of the deck.)

The player who is dealt one card (a "shield") tries to find the king by turning over cards. Each card turned over that isn't the king costs him or her a coin to match the one atop the card, except the card that matches the shield card, which must then be immediately shown to the player who laid down the 20-card Tableau. The match between the overturned card and the turning player's shield card must be exact in suit and type. If so, the turning player pays nothing for flipping the card over; instead, the player who laid out the Tableau pays the turning player double the value of the coin on the flipped card. If the king is discovered before only four cards are left, the player who

dealt the Tableau must pay the turning player double the value of the most valuable coin on any card on the Table.

This simple gambling game is sometimes enlivened in two ways: "calling the hounds" and "telling." Calling the hounds is the practice of allowing the turning player to call out any two cards except the king by name, including suit and type, after all coins and cards are laid out in the Tableau but before any card has been turned over. If these cards are in the Tableau, the player who laid out the Tableau must turn them over at this time. Neither player pays anything at this time, but the turning player's odds are bettered.

In telling, a favorite practice in Cormyr, the turning player must tell a joke, incident, or tale leading up to each card turnover. An example follows:

'Tis said that the hero Ambrangarr of Turlagol once found a mirror in a wizard's tower, boldly stepped through it, and found himself in the lair of a dragon. The dragon asked him a riddle: "Fits in my mouth but fills a cavern. What is it?" Ambrangarr, being a hero, and therefore not overly quick or keen of wit, knew not the answer ("smoke"), so the dragon tried to slay him. Ambrangarr swept up a chest from the dragon's heaped, glittering treasure hoard, and jammed it into the dragon's jaws. Then he slew it by plunging his sword deep into both its eyes. The dragon died, crushing the chest as its jaws convulsed, and out of the shattered chest fell—a card.

At this point the turning player chooses a card and turns it over with a flourish.





Knightswood

This tranquil wooded hamlet grew around several knights' steadings (hence its name), but doesn't seem to have developed all that much. Today, Knightswood consists of an arched wooden bridge over the Starwater; a sawmill beside it; a woodcarver's shop where strong chests, stools, and chairs are made and sold; the cottages of foresters; and the Old Owlbear, a good (if rustic) inn.

Local woodcarvers are licensed to cut a limited number of trees from the forest in specific clearings around Knightswood. A local circle of druids dedicated to Silvanus, the Knightswood Nine, ensures that no unlawful felling occurs. The circle's ongoing efforts have made the forest around Knightswood rich in exotic plants, bustling with woodland creatures, and beautiful to the eye. They're rumored to dwell in an underground home reached by climbing down into a huge hollow tree and to cultivate mushrooms in a vast series of caverns linked to their abode. These caverns are eerily lit by glowing fungi that grow among the 'shrooms and afford the druids several back door exits to the surface. The exits emerge in the woods all around the village.

The Nine can be contacted by speaking to Aunglar the miller or his assistant Jaerith. The Nine are all old men. They are led by Draguth Endroun, a white-maned, opinionated man who likes to cultivate an air of mystery and is known to wield a *staff of the woodlands*.

Knightswood was home to the master bard Chanthalas, composer of the famous song "The Cormyte's Boast" that is roared out in many a taproom and fireside when tankards have been emptied several times. I've included its lyrics on a succeeding

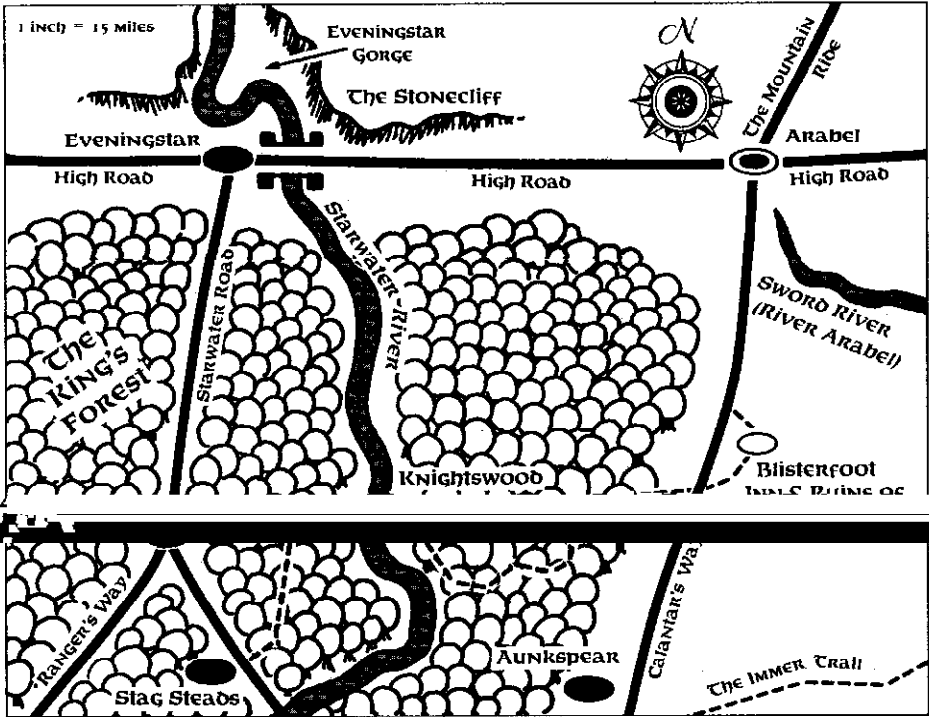
page for travelers who don't want to be left out when everyone else is bawling out the words more or less in time—though seldom more or less in tune.

The tumble-down cottage of the master bard largely owes its present decrepit state to the efforts of many searchers who have tried to find his *harp of charming* in the 50-odd winters since he died. If anyone has found it, she or he has spirited it away and escaped detection.

Knightswood was also home to the wizard Cauldigurn the Black, a mild-mannered war wizard known for the battle spells he devised, all of which combined harmful effects with an area of conjured darkness and were the origin of his nickname. Cauldigurn died in Sembia 22 winters ago, and his small cottage stands roofless and empty. Somewhere around it, locals insist, is an invisible *gate* to his real home, where his spellbooks, magical items, and wealth presumably still lie. Several war wizards have thoroughly searched the cottage and the woods around, but no trace of a magical way to elsewhere—or any magic at all—has yet been found.

The most famous current resident of Knightswood is Baerelus the Bold, an aging satyr who's an expert on the history and habits of beings of the King's Forest and a confidant of many young folk. For 60 years he's been giving wise advice for free to young lovers, runaways, and Cormytes whose problems trouble them deeply.

Baerelus can usually be found near the Old Oak, a huge, gnarled old tree that stands alone in the first clearing north of the mill. He's rumored to have magical means of protecting himself against those who offer him harm or try to kidnap him. At the Old Owlbear, they often tell of the time he was



drugged with doctored wine, caged, and smuggled to Sembia by merchants planning to sell him to a college of learning in Selgaunt. The second night of the journey found the captors camped near the Hullack Forest. They fled for their lives when they went to feed Baerelus and found no sign of the old satyr. The cage was open and an angry gargoyle was waiting for them in it.

Places of Interest in Knightswood

Shops

Aunglar's Mill

Sawmill



This cluttered old shed has a placid, duck-

haunted pond and three small wheels in its millrace rather than the more usual single large one. Here Aunglar, his assistant Jaerith, and a half-dozen less skilled helpers cut timber into blocks, boards, beams, and spars. They're not very skilled woodcutters, but they don't charge much either.

Inns

The Old Owlbear



The Owlbear is old, rustic, and comfortable. It is a relaxed place run by graybeards with a tranquility to match their pace. Beware their parsnip wine, as it is far stronger than it seems. This inn sports nothing spectacular and is simply a solid, honest place ideal for rest and recuperation.



The Cormyte's Boast

*When Purple Dragons first rode the ways,
Swording every monster seen,
Then did adventurers' mighty plays
Hearten all in this land green.
But now with farmer and merchant both
I hearken more or lasting peace,
And find myself increasing loath
To welcome the weapons charter wreath.*

Chorus

*And in this land I'll proudly stand
Until my dying day, sir.
For whate'er king o'er all command
I'll still be a Cormyte brave, sir.*

*Now Sembian gold it piles up high,
And men show the price of their hides.
But there stand here folk you cannot buy
Whate'er changing fortune's tides.
So let all dandies prance and preen,
Doing anything for coins tossed their way.
Here in this pleasant kingdom green
I'll steadfast unbending stay.
Chorus*

*Now other lands sing prouder songs,
And their folk come swaggering our way.
But if those lands are so free of wrongs,
Why do their folk from home away?
Oh, many boasts are empty boasts,
And distant shores our hearts recall,
But among all other glittering toasts
There's one that beats 'em all
Chorus*

*And in Cormyr none shall starve or thirst
For so the fair law demands.
But of all fair folk we are the first
To strike down bad laws and commands.
Some folk may live in layer halls
Or wear cut gems on every toe.
Such folk take greater and grander falls
And so find harder rows to hoe.
Chorus*

*(Repeat the chorus if the company demands.
Usually the last chorus is sung once and then
again a second time at half speed and twice
the proud, emphatic volume!)*





Mouth o' Gargoyles

This village of 460-odd folk stands on the Starwater Road between Dhedluk and Immersea, where the road fords the Starwater River. Its name comes from a mage of long ago who dwelt in a cave here and used a flight of gargoyles to drive folk away and mount night raids on both cargoes passing on the river and encamped travelers. These fearsome flying monsters terrorized the region for years until mages could be hired in numbers enough to destroy them and confront their master. The resulting battle blew apart the cave, which had been known as the Mouth of the Gargoyles, and only its name remains today.

The battle also left a more lasting legacy: a wild magic curse that makes the whole village an unreliable locale for spellcasting. Spells almost always go awry here, and magical item effects go wild most times they are invoked. Signs are posted to prevent magic use by the unwary. They clearly state that it is against Crown law to try to cast or unleash magic within the area bounded by the signs, which is the entire village. War wizards and Crown officers are exempted from this law, but they have their own rules against breaking it.

The mere presence of magical items doesn't awaken the curse, but any visitor who tries to activate even the most minor magic creates an immediate spellstorm of wild magic effects that spirals off in all directions. For example, trees turn blue, shrubs begin to levitate and drift about, leaves turn to glass and metal shards and fly about in all directions, stone turns to

water, earth is hurled up into wavelike immobile shapes, and birds explode into fireballs here and there.²⁶

The damage that such wild magic storms can do is considerable, and folk can easily be slain. Miscreants who willfully cause such effects are typically imprisoned for a tenday and lose all carried goods as a forfeit. If such storms are caused by adventurers, they have their charter revoked or suspended for a month or more. Those who accidentally cause wild magic surge spellstorms and can *prove* that their act wasn't willful (not an easy thing to do) receive lighter sentences.

Mouth o' Gargoyles today is a village of woodcarvers, furnituremakers, and makers and sellers of oils. The oil producers are known as lighters. They glean flammable oils and less viscous amberglow²⁷ by probing deep into rock fissures near the site of the now-destroyed wizard's cave, where natural oils well up. They pump up the oil they locate, allow it to settle, and then filter it. From time to time, a spontaneous ball of fire or jet of flame bursts up from beneath the earth, hurling an unfortunate lighter or two into the air, and the air around the rocks has a heavy reek that makes most folk ill.

Over the years, many folk have mysteriously disappeared around the village. Some locals believe the vanished folk have been swallowed up by magical *gates* opened up by the wild magic. Others credit a mad mage who uses gates to kidnap folk. Still others blame the disappearances on drow raiders stealing up from beneath the earth. The true cause of the disappearances is still unknown.

²⁶The *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* and *Tome of Magic* sourcebooks contain additional wild magic effects.

²⁷Ambreglow is used as a lubricant and to keep blades from rusting.



Places of Interest in Mouth o' Gargoyles

Shops

Bendagar's Barrels

Cooper

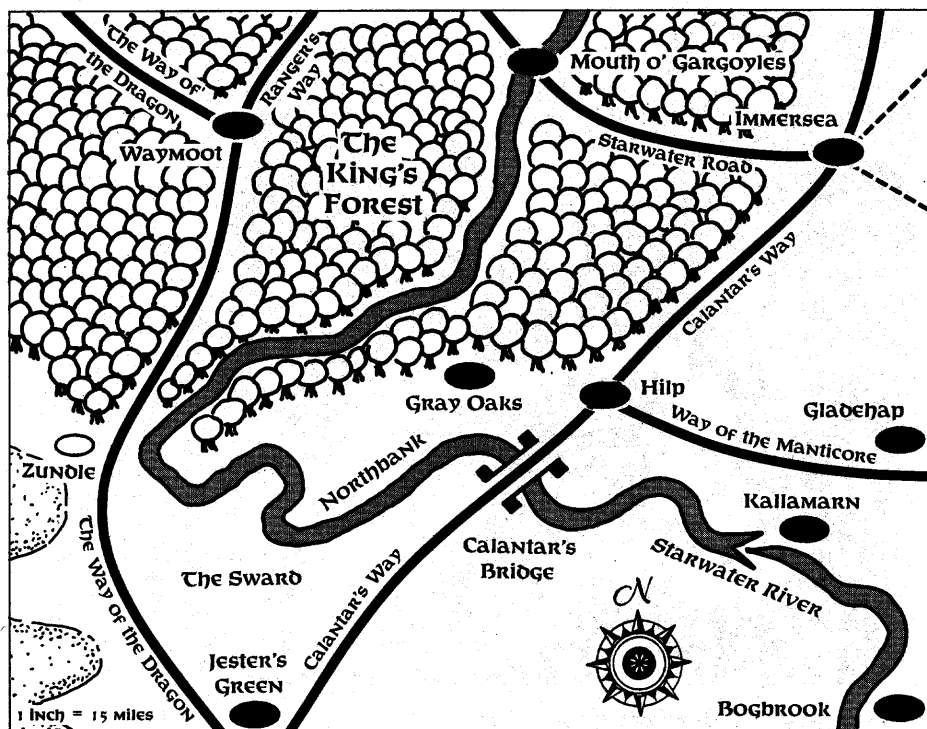


The hearty, beer-swilling owner of this shop looks rather like a barrel himself. In this cavernous former barn he makes and sells barrels of all sizes, from tiny herb kegs that fit in your palm—made for wearing around a lady's neck to provide scent in odoriferous surroundings—to tuns that one can fit an intact horse or monster carcass into. Those very small kegs cost 1 gp each, and the largest cost 65 gp. The standard sizes vary slightly in price according to what woods they're made of, how they're sealed, if they have an inner liner or not, and how many

bands hold them together, but they average as follows: A hand keg costs 2 sp and a cask 3 sp. A barrel of the size most folk are used to runs 4 sp for a simple sample and 1 gp for a heavy-duty banded one. A butt costs 12 gp for a plain sample and 20 gp for heavy-duty workmanship.

At these low prices, merchants can afford to buy in bulk, and they do. The shop is usually a steam-filled madhouse of workers bending wood, clamping bands, and rushing hoops or semifinished barrels here and there. It's not unusual for Bendagar and his staff to turn out 80 barrels or more in a day.

Bendagar's never without a pipe and tankard near him, and he likes to gossip about Cormyr's politics and nobles. Bring him some good ale and you're likely to hear some frank observations about the high and mighty of Cormyr that would shock some ears greatly!



Thaelin's Finework

Small Boxes and Finework Coffers



The quiet, careful Thaelin Althor is a retired warrior from Chessenta. He stands fully 7 feet tall. Two crossed two-handed swords hang near at hand on his shop wall. Locals tell me he used those swords to fell 17 orcs the last time a raiding band burst out of the forest and fell on the village. Apparently the goblin kin know about the wild magic conditions in Mouth O' Gargoyles, and once or twice a year they take advantage of the forest cover and the fact that they're unlikely to be met by defending magic.

Thaelin makes and sells a wide variety of small, delicate, ornamentally carved boxes. Most of them are hand-sized boxes or

slightly larger coffers. They cost 6 to 200 gp, and they come with latches and rings for locks to be fitted to them. They are ideal for storing papers, coins, and the like. Exquisite!

Tavern/Inn/Festhall

The Gargoyle's Perch



Run by a dozen friends who hire out as escorts to interested guests, this old, sprawling, and ramshackle roadhouse has a poor wine cellar, a good selection of ales and stouts, and a rather poor dining room of the "we keep it dim so you can't see what you're eating—and for good reason" sort. Its sleeping facilities are a series of similarly dim, seldom-cleaned bed-chambers. I was not impressed.



Stag Steads

Once a druid's home, this isolated locale has been an ogre's den, a brigand's stronghold, and finally a hunting lodge forfeited to the Crown when the last Goldfeather noble was executed for treason by King Dhalmass in 1191 DR. Ever since, it's been used by the royal family, the three royal noble clans (the Crownsilvers, Huntsilvers, and Truesilvers), and by others (by invitation only).

Some 70 years ago, lesser nobles fought for a chance to risk their necks hunting stags and boar through the trees with spears. A rare few had the pleasure of doing so from the enchanted *flying saddle* of *Thamos* before that useful item disappeared—stolen, 'tis said, by an impoverished noble hired by a Sembian mage, who hoped to make many of the things but failed. Now all the fashion conscious have already gone hunting. The rush of haughty folk has slowed to a trickle, though a hunting tour is still a coming-of-age ritual of sorts for young male nobles.

The Place

This luxurious hunting lodge has been dug into hillsides, planted over with mosses, and bulwarked with saplings that have since grown into respectable trees until today it seems to grow out of the forest like a turtle half-hidden in a puddle. It's hard to see the place until you're almost at its doors. Inside, it's cool, dim, and damp except in the circular dining room where a gigantic hearth suitable for roasting three

whole deer or boars at once warms the chamber. If one's not given to bone-ache from the damp, the Stead can be a secure den in the depths of one of the most beautiful forests humans can easily reach.

The Prospect

Attendance at the Stead today is still by invitation only, but since Vangerdahast began holding war wizard conferences here, and Alusair Nacacia and the wilder young Huntsilver nobles started to use the place as a retreat for trysts, many an untitled guest has hunted out of the Stead for a few days. It's unusual to stay more than six or seven nights or a tenday at the outside. Nobles who try to take up residence here for longer are politely asked to leave—if necessary, by the Royal Magician himself, summoned for the purpose by message stone. (A teleport *gate* that links the place with the Palace of the Purple Dragon in Suzail is hidden somewhere in the dark back rooms of the Stead. It whisks royals, war wizards, their retainers, and flat stones with message parchments wrapped around them back and forth whenever necessary.)

Despite the lodge's continuous use for over two centuries, hunting in the area is still good. Local rumor has it that war wizards magically restock the King's Forest in the vicinity.²⁸ Bards—especially elves and half-elves—like to stop at the Stead because of its verdant surroundings. However, if royals or senior war wizards are in residence, bards arriving unannounced can expect to undergo a magically assisted interrogation by a war wizard, to find out just who they

²⁸Elminster says this is true. A cavern south of the Stead is home to one of two deepspawn whose captivity is known to be sanctioned by Vangerdahast. The other is in a secret cellar of the Palace. Both have been fed on an exclusive diet of boar, stag, grouse, and pheasant.



are and what unadvertised powers they may wield, before they're allowed to stay.

The Provender

Fare at the Stead is fern-and-fiddlehead soup, morels, and other forest vegetables flanking roast boar, venison, and grouse. Though the menu seldom varies, the wine cellar is excellent, the cook is a master of sauces designed to add a little variety to the meat, and—best of all — *everything's free*. That is, it's free to a guest.

Bards aren't paid for their entertainment, but they also stay for free. Travelers not allowed in can camp at a forest clearing not far from the Stead and buy meals from a serving window on one side of the Stead for a single night only. Purple Dragon hunters assisted by war wizards who dress like their fellow foresters firmly move all squatters on. Travelers who think to camp and sneak to the Stead later to eavesdrop are warned that concealed war wizards (perhaps magically using the eyes of local animals) keep watch over encamped folk to prevent just such unauthorized visits.

The Places

Travelers buying their meals through the window can expect to pay 1 gp per platter. A platter, a simple oval of metal with a raised edge to hold in sauce, holds a generous serving for a single hungry person. Wine is 4 gp per bottle, and ale—not the best—can be had for 2 gp for a hand keg. The platter, which is stamped with a full-face, heavily antlered stag's head, is yours

to keep. There's a brisk trade in these souvenirs among socially climbing Cormyreans. Drinks are served in their containers, with nondescript clay cups provided on request.

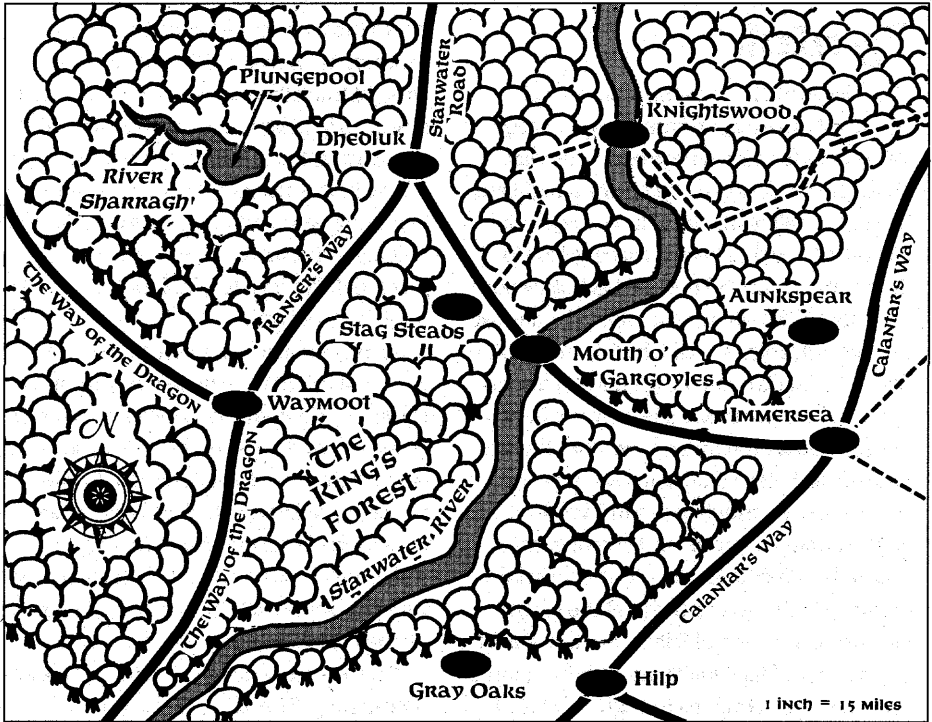
Travelers' Lore

Guests at the Stead can wander the woods by themselves, but unless they're frequent visitors or of one of the royal houses, they're strongly encouraged by the staff to hire one of the local hunters as guides. The strongest encouragements come from Bald Jhawn, the head huntsman, a massively muscled master wrestler with a plentiful fund of tall tales about hunting mishaps and "weirds of the woods."

The best of the badged foresters²⁹ is generally acknowledged to be one Thumble Droun, a half-elf of pranksome ways. Calmer and more easily located for hire are Bald Jhawn himself and several taciturn individuals who go by the names of Ithaglor Bruensal, Dreth Milyntytr, and Doalogh Dultor. Their fees vary from 1 to 6 gp per day, depending on who one hires and what game the hunter is told to seek.

All of these guides are expert hunters, trappers, and skimmers, and all of them know the local trails, including the way to such landmarks as Oadal's Stand and the Mushroom Dell. Oadal's Stand is an eerie hollow ring of massive shadowtop trees, named for the mage said to have perished in its center in a sorcerers' duel some centuries ago. The Mushroom Dell is a small, bowl-shaped depression in the woods where no trees stand. Always misty and shaded by huge trees around it, the

²⁹*Elminster*: They wear a badge of 12 tiny green stars encircling a white mushroom on a brown field that signifies acceptance of their skills by war wizard inspectors.



damp dell is carpeted in mushrooms (many edible) and mosses. Some of the mosses and 'shrooms, locals insist, cover the bones of brigands slain here in a fight with Purple Dragons long, long ago.

For an extra coin or two, all of these guides can take you off the trails to some overgrown ruins that are said to be the remnants of early, long-fallen noble families' keeps. Local lore says they're crammed with ghosts and treasure and liberally provided with monster-haunted underground catacombs—but then, local legend in Cormyr rarely says anything else.

Most hunters are happy to leave the Stead with several hearty meals, some salted and barreled meat for their larders that they slew themselves (or, in the case of the more inept or weaker hunters, that

they helped their guide slay), and perhaps a stuffed and mounted head of their kill to proudly display on some wall or other if they bagged a stag or boar of respectable size. Several locals dress these stuffed heads to finished form for 5 to 10 gp per head, depending on the size of the head and how quickly the finished piece is desired. The best is Old Martya, two cottages west of the Stead.

Some hunters, however, come back year after year in pursuit of the elusive Ghost Stag, a giant white stag said to be able to vanish when cornered, fading into nothingness. Senior war wizards who often visit the Stead tell me that the Stag is a real beast with a natural teleportation power and perhaps other psionic talents that allow it to escape spells that seek it and not any sort of undead.



Tyrluk

This village of 270 or so folk doesn't welcome visitors except farmers from nearby, who come to market here once a tenday. Folk who must stop in Tyrluk for a night are advised to call on the local lord, the prodigiously fat, hard-drinking, roaring-old rip Suldag the Boar, and endure his boisterous hospitality. The villagers are apt to be almost hostile to strangers. Just why folk here don't like outsiders is something I haven't discovered, but I know they suffered at the hands of brigands and swindling merchants who were lords before Suldag for many years.

There's not much to see in Tyrluk anyway: a smithy, a carter, and cottages. Most locals work for Charn the Smith or Oglul's Cartworks. At the south end of the village sits the pony ranch of Silturr Shadowshield, a producer of top-quality mountain mounts for the Purple Dragons in High Horn and anyone else with coins enough. His beasts typically go for 36 to 40 gp.

As one can tell, Tyrluk's businesses can be very useful to caravans in need of new horses, horseshoes, wheels, chains, or new wagons. Locals are happy to provide these things in return for good coin of the realm but still say firmly that they don't like outsiders. Visitors are told to "camp over there," with an abrupt arm gesture indicating the location of "there."

The place indicated is a moribund farm at the north end of town. It has four grassy fields, two good wells, and several old barns. Travelers are expected to keep to it. The villagers have provided firepits, ample firewood kept dry under cover, and privies, so why not humor them? One can go places more welcoming on the morrow.

The only landmark of interest in Tyrluk

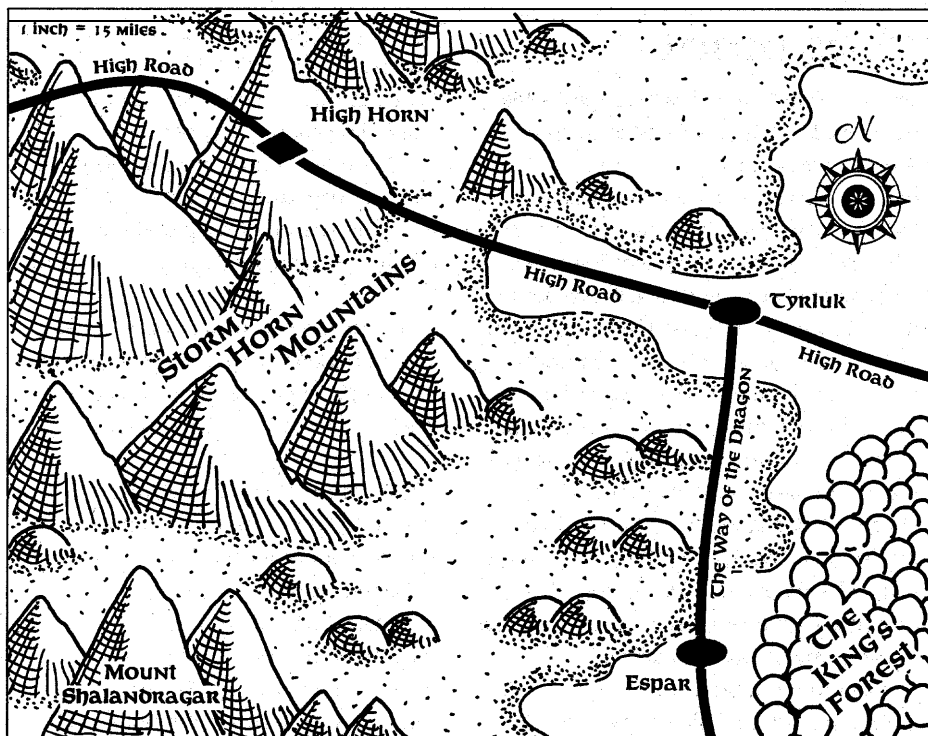
lies in the trees just west of the campground the Bowshot Run, an arrow-straight track through the forest. This flat, grassy strip of land has been cleared of all shrubs and trees, and it mysteriously stays that way. It runs from nowhere to nowhere, beginning and ending in the forest without visible ruins, cairns, or anything underground (folk have dug looking) at its ends or along its length.

Its origins are unknown. Some sages hazard it might have been a ritual approach route to a now-vanished temple. Its name comes from the use made of it these days, since with trees along it marked for distances, it makes an ideal archery range. Visitors inclined to overstay their cool welcome are warned that most locals are *very* proficient with their bows and hunt to fill their cooking pots every few days.

There's one legend of Tyrluk that bears mentioning: The village is the reputed home of the Blue Blade. In Cormyr's folklore, the Blue Blade is a famous gallant brigand who stole from rich travelers on all of the roads that traversed the King's Forest but often gave gems from earlier hauls to pretty ladies when he waylaid them. If the Blue Blade were a single real man, he would have to be over 80 winters old by now. Although every fresh act of brigandry awakens fresh rumors of his involvement, there haven't been any proven sightings of him for more than 25 summers.

The Blue Blade was the original reason for war wizards being assigned to local guardhouses and ordered to accompany road patrols throughout the realm. Their seeking magic would make the career of a lone brigand foolhardy now.

When I first visited Tyrluk, I assumed the village folk were trying to hide some



brigand-related secret or other from me. The more I see of Tyrluk, and of younglings who've grown up and left it to dwell elsewhere in Cormyr, the more I think the local attitude is one of "the world is an evil place and, except for folk in need of our goods, brings us only ill." This encourages the folk of Tyrluk to have nothing to do with the outside world and to turn their backs on it whenever *it* comes seeking *them*.

Places of Interest in Tyrluk

INNS

The Old Man's Face



The best thing about this cold, dirty road-

house is its charmingly carved sign-board, which displays a kindly, smiling old man's face. There's nothing kindly about the interior unless you're a local. Outsiders meet flat, unfriendly gazes and are seated at a dark, cold corner table.

The Old Face serves as the villagers' restaurant and tavern, concentrating on bad but strong beer and simple, hearty roasts and boiled vegetables rescued from wretchedness by a variety of spiced sauces. The inn's only regular paying customers are the 14 men and four women of the local Purple Dragon garrison. The chief amusement of the locals in Tyrluk seems to be seeing which of the male soldiers will catch which of their fellow king's women to be his wife.



Waymoot

This town³⁰ of 1,100 folk is the largest settlement inside the King's Forest and represents one of Cormyr's formerly secret defenses. Originally a muddy meeting of trails in the trees that was haunted by trolls who preyed on many travelers, Waymoot was enlarged by cutting back the woods to make a campground, and then a large compound, and later a trade center complete with a fortified keep and a cluster of horse farms that provide the Purple Dragons with quality mounts in plenty. As the local saying goes: "Ever seen a host of mounted Purple Dragons lower lances and charge? Well, they're riding Waymoot!" That saying has in turn led to a Cormyr-wide phrase for a mounted charge or thunder of approaching hooves: "Waymoot come calling."

Waymoot is a busy travelers' town. Its lifeblood is all the folk just passing through. Some of them don't even know that Cormyrean legend believes this is the true heart of the realm.

Cormyreans believe that the Obarskyr kings sleep in some spell-hidden grotto to which their essences steal after death. There they await the time when the land will need them again. When that fateful time draws down, they'll rise, ghostly blades in hand, to ride the skies and smite the foes of the realm they loved and led.

And somewhere under Waymoot is where the dead kings sleep. Where? Under the keep, some say, and point to the ever-present feeling of watchful menace that many folk feel in its lower levels as proof. This theory is supported by the occasional ringing clangs heard there, echoing from

the deeps of the earth; folk say these are the stirrings of the restless blades of the kings. Whether this is true or not, there is a special feeling about Waymoot.

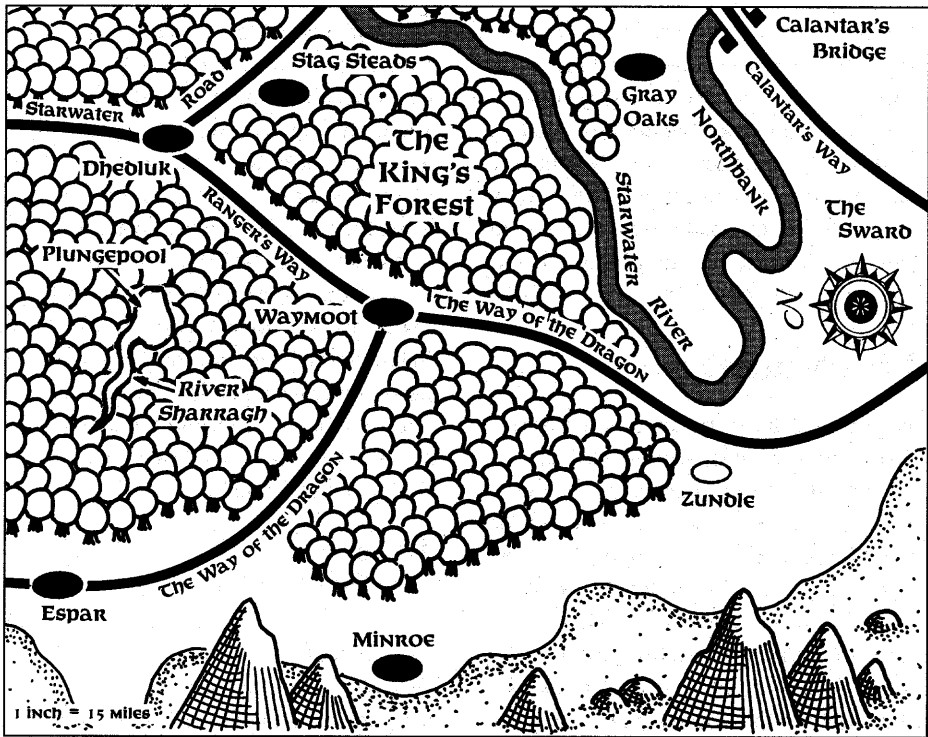
The legend of the Sleeping Kings is overlaid with another tale, remembered in an old snatch of song that has become a children's rhyme throughout Cormyr:

*Bring me the key from dungeons deep,
Where undead knights a-rusting sleep,
That doth unlock the dragon's door
And we'll swim in gold forevermore!*

This rhyme refers to a collapsed dungeon labyrinth under central Waymoot—very real catacombs that were once the treasure vaults of a gold dragon that used its puny human form to store its gold in the abandoned undercellars of a long-vanished keep. The dragon was ultimately slain by a beholder who broke up into the cellars from a cavern below—and presumably still lairs there!

Waymootans know these tales, but other Cormyreans and outlanders are more likely to have heard of the troll raids that forced earlier kings to create the great clearing that now holds Waymoot town and of the hero who almost single-handedly held off one troll attack the local lord, Filfar Woodbrand. Though he dislikes the nickname of "Trollkiller" he earned that day, Lord Woodbrand (now a seasoned warrior) remains prodigiously strong. He's been known to hoist aloft two benches of seated drinkers at the Silver Wink, his favorite drinking spot, and carry them around the taproom without spilling a drop from anyone's tankard.

³⁰A map of Waymoot is found in the Geography chapter of the *Cormyr* game accessory, in the section on smaller towns.



Folk say Lord Woodbrand halted a wagonload of fleeing thieves once by blocking the two galloping dray horses all alone and then lifting them both off the ground to bring the wagon to a halt. Then the lord set the beasts down and straightway tore the reins apart like so many cobwebs to sever them from the wagon. The thieves drew steel and stabbed at him from out of the sides of their wagon, so the lord calmly picked it up and hurled it across a field, tumbling it end over end until it came to a halt upside down and the dazed men spilled out of it. In the course of collecting them, Lord Woodbrand bent the sword of one bandit who tied to hack at him into a half-circle before picking the man up under one arm and going on to get the others.

Many drinkers at the Wink love to

watch their lord show his strength: A favorite stunt of theirs is to play tug of war with all the visitors in the place. The lord stands alone at one end of the rope, his back to the door, and everyone else tugs against him. He usually drags everyone out of the place without any visible effort.

Once an adventuring band made the mistake of drawing weapons in a brawl in the Wink. The lord waded into the fray, plucked up each armed contestant, and hurled them over the heads of the brawling crowd and out the door. He neglected to open the door first. After that first brief and involuntary flight, a winning local held the door open for the duration of the brawl, just in case.

The fortunate visitor may well witness Lord Woodbrand at play but should not



be tricked into arm-wrestling with him or with any Waymootan. (Any Waymootans asked to wrestle will profess weariness and ask a friend—the lord, of course—to take their place.) Needless to say, Waymootans love their lord. If you've seen him holding stallions at bay at stud sessions or helping with difficult foalings, as I have, you know why.

Landmarks

Waymoot today is the town of the horse. A seemingly endless supply of quality horseflesh is bred, reared, and trained here, and merchants come to Waymoot from far and wide to buy light, medium, and heavy war horses. All of the local horse farms are good: Llamskir's is perhaps the most famous, but Tirin's and Burilla's are arguably better. Kryson is the fourth of the horse farms.

Waymoot also produces wagons of high clearance, sturdy make, and nimble handling, well suited to bouncing over roots and around narrow bends on forest trails. These are popular purchases with visiting merchants.

Finally, no less than two temples, the Sheltering Hand and the Sounds of Joy stand in this out-of-the-way manmade clearing in the heart of the King's Forest. The Sheltering Hand is a temple of Tymora, and the Sounds of Joy is dedicated to Lliira.

Places of Interest in Waymoot

Palaces

Lord Woodbrand's Keep

This small but soaring walled keep sports a jail built onto the outside of its north

wall and a small forest of ballistae and catapults on its battlements. Within the walls, a stables and a barracks flank the keep. The lord and his guests inhabit the ground floor of the rather damp and gloomy central castle. In winter, winds howl through this place like agonized banshees, and Lord Woodbrand goes around carrying whole felled trees to break up as firewood! Few guests see the inside of the keep, but those who do can gaze upon stag's heads as large as small cottages that are mounted on its inside the walls and protected by preservative spells that glow eerily!

Temples

The Sheltering Hand

This temple to Tymora does a brisk business in healing and aiding those who risked danger and came up short, since the goddess believes all folk should face risks. The priests here are quite generous, often charging a stiff fee for healing magic and then dispensing a hot meal and a generous purse of coins to travel on with. They don't much care what faith the folk they're aiding profess; a person aided is a person who may well turn to Tymora again in need.

The tall, dignified Chancepriest Gothric looks every inch a king as he leads his small staff of priests in worship or on Tymora's business. Under his benevolent guidance, this temple has grown rich enough to purchase a guardian golem whose presence was revealed in the last troll raid.

The Sounds of Joy

This temple to Lliira is led by the fey and beautiful half-elven Queen of Joy (high



priestess) Jezarai Moonbolt, a bright, calculating lady who once led her flock in the veneration of Waukeen. The festivals mounted by this holy house are wild events of nightlong costumed dancing that are often attended in force by jaded Suzailan nobles and wealthy merchants.

The goddess tells the queen of joy that a festival should be mounted a ten-day hence by means of a vision, and a temple messenger is immediately sent to Suzail to spread the word. At sundown on festival night, Jezarai lies down on the altar, and Lliira signals the beginning of festivities to all by conferring a wild, continuous *shape change* on her high priestess. The dancing and carousing at these events often spills out over all Waymoot, but Lord Woodbrand always keeps a watchful eye out for thieves, perils of fire or injury, and unlawful mayhem.

Shops

Waymoot has few shops of note; they all seem to sell travelers' gear, though there's a good local bakery, too. None of the travelers' shops is particularly bad, but none of them are particularly outstanding either. Because of the clientele who like to gather there, the most interesting of these shops is:

Nightstar Guiding & Outfitters

Travelers' Gear



This well-equipped shop sells ropes, cord, wire, maps, boots, and other travelers' gear to all. Among the gear it stocks are blankets, packs, chests, candles,

torches, lamp oil in rigid belt boxes, and tents. It is a popular gathering place for adventurers and foresters, who meet over brandy or herb teas here and tell of what's befallen them. It's widely—and correctly, let me attest—rumored that the proprietress, the ranger Liriel Nightstar, is a Harper.³¹

Taverns

The Moon and Stars



This large tavern is a gathering place for all sorts of colorful characters, from retired pirates who are now local horsebreeders to active adventurers. A smattering of centaurs, swanmays, and even faerie dragons are apt to be visiting on any given night. It was here that Florin Falconhand of the Knights of Myth Drannor first met his bride-to-be, the ranger Dove, and it was here that King Azoun was attacked by a Zhentarim mage who shapechanged into a beholder. The mage was slain by a ki-rin in disguise who'd been quietly playing cards in a corner with several old men.

Order is kept in this potentially explosive mix of clientele by a veteran staff of rangers and ex-adventurers who are all allowed to bear weapons by the king's decree. They always have a war wizard (or two) on duty to summon more powerful aid if need be.

The "Moonstars" serves Cormyr as a meeting ground for the dangerous and the exotic. It is close enough to Suzail for citizens of the capital to reach it, and far enough away to avoid frightening them or starting unwelcome rumors. More

³¹Elminster: Sigh. She's a 7th-level ranger, if ye *must* tell the world.



than once envoys from supposedly unfriendly realms and powers, such as pirate lords, Blades from Mulmaster, or agents of Thay, have quietly met with Vangerdahast or senior Cormyrean mages and nobles of Cormyr here to discuss matters of state and trade that neither side wanted made more public. Needless to say, the Moonstars offers private gaming and drinking chambers for those who need or want to be discreet.

If you visit, you may see such exalted folk as are mentioned above. More likely though, you'll just sit, watch the passing parade, and enjoy the pickles, hot buns spread with pâtés, diced fruit, and cheese-stuffed fried mushroom caps served here—all accompanied by your choice of the contents of a superb wine cellar and a substantial selection of brews.

The Moonstars is one of the great taverns of the world, worthy of any land or exalted guest. It is not to be missed.

INNS

Beruintar's Hone Warmer



The least-known of Waymoot's inns, this is the "overflow" inn where folk who can't get rooms at the better places must stay. It's also the chosen abode of exotic visitors such as lizard men or minotaurs who're part of chartered adventuring bands (but are watched suspiciously nonetheless).

The inn consists of warm but unexciting rooms, a hot communal bath on each floor, and a small, unvarying menu of soup, hot breads, and teas. Guests should be careful in the baths, as several

folk have been surprised while unclad and near-weaponless in these chambers and have been murdered by rivals.

Overall, I'd call this place adequate.

The Cup and Spoon



As its name suggests, this inn aims to be Waymoot's largest and best dining spot, and it seems to be succeeding. In fact, on some nights its loud and crowded dining hall can bother overnight guests desiring a restful evening. Many locals come here to partake of the ever-more-exotic dishes prepared by the halfling chefs of the Whistletar family in their bid to overshadow the kitchens of the more famous Silver Wink.

Three rentable reception rooms and a communal hot bath separate the dining hall from the guests' chambers. The guest rooms are tidy and comfortably furnished. The lofty feather comforters on the beds in winter are a nice touch.

The Cup and Spoon aims for a well-lit, clean, wholesome feel, discouraging escorts, adventurers, drunks, and sometimes just folk who look dangerous or disreputable from staying the night. If you like such security, this is the place for you.

The Old Man



The most traditional of Waymoot's inns, this is a house of large fireplaces, old shields hung everywhere on dark, old, wood-paneled walls, and bald-headed men nearly as ancient snoring against them. I felt like I was stepping back in



time, but many folk love such places. The floors, stairs, and furniture are all smooth with age, no one speaks loudly, complimentary zzar and brandy sit on sideboards by every fire, and the servants are never seen. While I was there, two old ex-Purple Dragons were searching for secret passages with the excited glee of young children. They found some, too.

The Silver Wink



The Wink is the most famous of Waymoot's inns and, as mentioned earlier, is Lord Woodbrand's favorite. Its name comes from its signboard, which features a glowing silver sliver of a moon—not a winking lass, as some might think.

This large establishment boasts an excellent dining room. (I recommend ordering the stuffed stream crabs or the succulent stag.) The inn's tastefully furnished guest rooms vary in size from single warrior's bunks to suites of six large chambers, but all quarters, even the singles, have attached garderobes and robing rooms. And the Wink's taproom has drinkables unmatched in breadth and quantity this side of Waterdeep.

Want to try wine from Evermeet? If you're wealthy, it's here. Ever wonder what they drink in Zakhara or fabled Shou Lung? Here too. Thirsty for royal Tethyrian vintages looted from castle cellars when civil war broke out? Plenty in stock. Want to try a precious bottle of ancient blackrun wine wrested from the claws of baatezu in lost Myth Drannor?

There's only one left, but for a mere 1,000 gp it's yours. There's even a ceramic bottle of sherry available for a "mere" 3,500 gp. It's from a king's tomb in Mulhorand and is reputed to confer magical powers on its drinker.

While you're making do with a far less expensive vintage, you can watch somewhat inebriated folk trying to impress each other on the dance floor to the accompaniment of skilled visiting minstrels or the surprisingly good house trio, the Silvershawms.³² And if you're lucky, it will be a day when one of the Waymootan forest patrols has come back with a kill from the depths of the forest. If so, you can try a slice of mouth-watering roast whole boar basted in garlic butter and Arabellan dry (or some other ruby wine when a caravan has brought something from Calimshan or the Tashalar) for hours. Even if it is not a day for roast boar, the Wink always offers a green ice-rime dessert made of a sweet minty milk jelly that is set on ice in glass goblets to harden. It is fit for the gods!

Festive dance evenings at the Wink end in a last bittersweet song to the gods for a brighter tomorrow, and then things break up into little groups of late-night talkers. A wakeful guest who takes care to look inconspicuous can hear a lot of *very* interesting things about goings-on in the realm.

The floors at the Wink are sound-proofed by thick, soft rugs and many tapestries to prevent late-night conversation from bothering sleepers. When one finally does go to bed, there's a warm drink waiting in a towel-wadded coffer near the bed. In truth, this is a wonderful place!

³²The Silvershawms are composed of Purple Dragons in the hundred-strong Waymoot garrison.





The East Reaches



n ancient Faerûnian saying¹ runs: "Every realm has a frontier, no matter how crowded or civilized."

The east reaches are Cormyr's present frontier, and, some sages insist, its future. Others say the true frontier, the lands that Cormyr will look to after the east reaches are crowded and settled, is the west reaches. Still others give that honor to the Stonelands and Goblin Marches, seeing Cormyr ultimately as a realm stretching from the Far Hills to the Thunder Peaks, bounded on the north by Anauroch and on the south by everything on the south shore of the Lake of Dragons that Westgate can't hold against the troops of Cormyr.

An East Reach Overview

There's a saying in the east reaches: "We only have one lake in Cormyr, but it's a big one." This reference to the huge Wyvernwater is, of course, false. Cormyr has many lakes and ponds too small and remote to feature on most maps. In fact, it is hard to get far from the sound of water running or crashing on the shore in the Forest Kingdom. Still, the Wyvernwater dominates and divides the east reaches of the kingdom into the more settled and pastoral southern region between the Wyvernwater and the Way of

the Manticore and the frontier wilderness of the northern region. This northern region is where Cormyr is likely to expand in years to come, filling in the unsettled territories between Tilverton and Arabel. Two large areas need to be tamed for that expansion to be a happy and prosperous one: Hullack Forest, a great hiding place for brigands and predatory monsters, and the Stonelands.

Dragons also inhabit the Thunder Peaks. A sizable faction of war wizards, led by Vangerdahast, see the taming of a flight of dragons to be an essential part of securing the east reaches of the realm. They want to create an aerial strike force/patrol force of mages armed with wands on dragonback. A more realistic and immediate goal is to catch and tame some of the hippogriffs found in large wings² in the Thunder Peaks. They're most numerous near the source of the Immerflow, where lost mines lie in several high valleys. These mines were abandoned by humans and dwarves centuries ago after vicious attacks from hobgoblin clans that still lair in the area.

Natural resources may yet draw intruders and Cormyreans alike into the east reaches of Cormyr. The Thunder Peaks are known to hold many valuable ores and some gem deposits. The spices ateris and bentilan can also be gathered up and down the east reaches³ in the foothills of both the Thunder Peaks and

¹This saying is probably Netherese in origin, as folk in Halruaa use it but can't remember who said it.

²Some use the word *herds* instead; others prefer the term *scraveys*.

³For more on these substances, consult the Common Life in the Mountains chapter of *The Thunder Peaks and Storm Horns* booklet of the *Elminster's Ecologies* boxed set.



the Storm Horns. Bentilan berries are worth 2 sp per pound; the short-lived ateris buds bring only about 3 cp a pound. Moreover, the trees in the depths of Hullack Forest hold future mast spars and roof beams that are growing increasingly valuable as monsters make logging the untouched parts of the Elven Court more and more perilous.

Small Settlements

Setting dreams aside, it's clear that the east reaches just north of the Wyvernwater are fast being settled, and places like Redspring may soon grow to prominence. The land is rolling hill country, with scrub woods and gorse growing in profusion. Small ravines hold tiny, tinkling brooks that run down, ultimately, to the Wyvernwater. Of old, wyverns were numerous in the area (hence the lake's name), but they were largely exterminated centuries ago. Yet, other perils remain. Monsters of all sorts raid the area from the Stonelands and from Hullack Forest. They have been bolstered in recent years by brigands and orc and goblin bands sponsored by the Zhen-tarim of Darkhold.⁴

As a result of such perils, settlements in the reaches tend to be small and stockaded. Though settlements in this area are few in number and can be of crucial importance to a lost or harried traveler, I've left significant discussion of several of the less remarkable places out of this book. For travelers' reference,

notes on a few of these communities follow.

Bospir

The quintessential sheep market town, this dusty gathering of cottages stands at a trailmoot in the midst of many sheep and cattle ranches clustered around three deep wells. The only good road to it links it with the East Way to the north. The stink of sheep dung is everywhere.

Bospir isn't an inspiring place to visit unless you love wool, fancy lamb on your table, or want to buy and sell the beasts. The Drover's Inn is the only place to stay overnight, though there are plenty of rooming houses that let rooms by the tenday. The Nightbleat Tavern is regularly rocked by drunken brawls, as sheepshearers let loose on each other. The Nightbleat's name is a shining example of Bospiran humor.

Ghars

Standing just within raiding reach of the Vast Swamp, Ghars boasts a respectable Purple Dragon garrison. The garrison is regarded by all in the town as an impartial and incorruptible police force. Its presence has led to the growth of this village into a town of some 1,200 folk. It serves the farmers for miles around as a market town, and many a wagon of radishes or fruit that arrives in Suzail as "Hultail's best" actually came from the stalls here. Fruits and vegetables from the farmers' market must be rushed by

⁴This long-held belief has been proven through magical questioning. It is also supported by the many "black" rings (*amulets of proof against detection and location*) worn by the members of such bands, rings they would normally not have the resources or luck to obtain in quantity.



fast coaches, changing horses many times along the way, to get the goods to Marsember or Suzail before they spoil.

Ghars has wells but no plentiful water; its grist mill is ox-driven. Its largest exports are oats, barley, and wheat, which can be shipped slowly to Hultail and thence by barge⁵ to Wheloon.

The arrival of the Purple Dragons brought other services to Ghars, notably a smith of some skill named Aunsible Durn. Folk come for miles to buy his tools, plowshares, scythes, and horse-shoes. Its all the rage among the wealthier farmers to equip their laborers with halberds, bills, or pikes from Durn “so that we can do our bit, if the realm should—gods on their thrones forbid—be invaded.” Many locals think these squires really just want an excuse to parade around in grand-looking armor at every wedding and festival day while “protected” by a ramshackle honor guard.

Visitors should note that Ghars has two forgettable, but not dreadful, inns: the Sheaf of Wheat and the Silver Scythe. It also host a rather pleasant, if rustic, tavern, the Bold Bard.

Griffon Hill

This eminence is a rocky height adorned with little more than an inn that has been burned down repeatedly by orc raiders and a few fortified cottages inhabited by hardy shepherd folk. The cottages have good wells, and there’s rumored to be a cavern in the heart of the hill that the villagers can all retreat into if necessary, so

folk stay despite the danger. (Legend whispers that the cavern goes down into the Underdark and that the villagers know how to retreat there if in dire straits.)

Three priests of Chauntea dwell at Griffon Hill, and they’re the only healers of consequence for miles around. One of the Chaunteans is also now powerful enough to defend the settlement by conjuring earth elementals or controlling the weather. To bring in extra cash, these priests sell holy water and, on occasion, heal for hire. They order needed goods from Arabel by means of several loyal messengers.

Brigands have tricked the folk of Griffon Hill before, and so their initial hospitality is rather thin. They leave the worst cottage open for visitors, a *faerie fire* glow marking its open door. Within are firewood, a bar for the door, straw cots, hitching rings for horses, and several stoppered jugs of water.

The traveler reaches Griffon Hill by following the Stonebolt Trail. It is located due east of the fabled goblin burial ground at the spot on most maps where the trail is shown changing direction. It’s not a place many nonadventurers ever see, though peddlers make it a regular stop to sell their wares, buy wool, purchase travel pots of spiced mutton stew. The griffons the hill is named for are long gone.

Halfhap

Halfhap was located on the edge of Cormyr until the annexation of Tilverton.

⁵As always, road transport costs about four times what it does to ship by water, and more if there isn’t much of a road linking the source with any other important place.



This walled town is growing in importance as Cormyr expands into the north-eastern lands. It is a no-nonsense, bleak place that exists to supply prospectors, traveling merchants, and outlying ranchers operating in region surrounding the upper Immerflow and the Stonelands.

Halfhap is protected by keeps at either end of its oval—well, giant-potato-shaped—ring of walls, wherein Purple Dragons dwell in strength. These Purple Dragons have hippogriff steeds, and their keeps sport numerous ballistae that are backed by a huge subterranean armory of ballistae ammunition reached by a winched lift.

Over a thousand of Halfhap's roughly 2,200 folk are soldiers. Monsters and Zhent-sponsored forces out of the Stonelands have attacked this area often. They still do so, especially each spring, when orcs who've grown restless and short of food over the winter boil down from the heart of the Desertsouth Mountains and raid across northern Cormyr.

Patrols out of Halfhap travel the Moonsea Ride regularly as far as Mootpost, halfway to Tilverton, and Gnollpost, in the heart of Gnoll Pass. At Mootpost the garrison at Tilverton takes over patrol duties, and at Gnollpost, the forces from Castle Crag assume these duties. Halfhap's patrols do a good job keeping the road safe, but the town they're based in has the feel—and the welcoming charm—of an armed camp.

Travelers stay here because they must take shelter while on the road or they have dealings with the shops here that supply food, tools, remounts, weapons, rope, and other supplies to folk using

Halfhap as a base. (These shops need endless resupplies to keep their shelves full.)

Travelers don't come to see the scenic sites of Halfhap because there aren't any. For those who must stay here, I recommend the Marching Myrmidon inn, the Doffed Cloak festhall, and Eversheld's Embers tavern. I hear an enterprising halfling clan, the Blacknee family, has set up shop in Halfhap with an eye to building a large inn with luxury baths, a dining room to be proud of, and suchlike. I await news of so welcome and unlikely an establishment opening. Travelers through Halfhap in the year ahead are asked to keep me posted.

Hillmarch

This is the closest thing to a mining town to be found in eastern Cormyr. Copper and a little silver, zinc, and nickel are the metals taken out of the Gnoll Peaks north of Hillmarch.

The old Cormyrean expression "Ye've as much brass as all Hillmarch" reflects the town's chief product. Though there is a farmers' market here and a Purple Dragon garrison in tiny Hillmarch Keep to guard the vital local brass industry from brigands, most of the town is given over to smoke-belching smelters, the shops and warehouses of brasscasters, and heaps of slag and leavings. An ever-present stink hangs over the town, and it's not a healthy place to live: The Grave Hills, south of the town, attest to how many locals die young—or just die, period.

None of this stops rowdy miners from drinking themselves into a state of rage



and brawling in, atop, and around just about every building in town that isn't shuttered and barred against them on their rare days off. It's a fearsome sight, I'm told. War wizards have often been called in to use spells to control the struggling men. Even the direct threat of leveled Purple Dragon halberds and blades hasn't make them falter in their mayhem on several occasions. Such bold disrespect for authority is unthinkable elsewhere in law-abiding Cormyr.

Located not far east of Castle Crag, Hillmarch is within easy reach of either the East Way (a day's ride) or the Mountain Ride. However, I can't recommend a visit to Hillmarch unless you wish to deal in brass castings. Local crafters make exquisite lamps, candelabras, thuribles, household ornaments, and small, useful everyday items.

Those with a taste for adventure are advised that the mines of Hillmarch tunnel ever northward—and deeper—into the Gnoll Peaks, whose gnolls were exterminated long, long ago. The miners have failed to turn up anything of more interest than an underground river. Its inky flow—so far unexplored—rises in one place and descends in a subterranean falls in another, presumably into the Underdark. No monsters of note have yet been reported, though there are persistent rumors of the weird creatures known as executioner's hoods attacking miners.

The miners all live in boarding houses or mining company barracks. The mining companies all have prosaic names: High Pick Delvings and Motherlode Ores are the best-known. In truth, the mining companies have all long since been bought up by

the various large trading costers based in Cormyr's cities and elsewhere, and so they have little independent identity left aside from their colorful names.

Hillmarch has seven or eight taverns but only one inn. The number of taverns varies, depending on how badly they've been damaged in recent brawls. The inn is called the Shovel of Sparkling Stones. It's a converted smelter that hasn't been converted all that much, if you know what I mean. Those desiring luxurious accommodations shouldn't travel to Hillmarch.

Redspring

Iron in the soil around Redspring colors the springs that rise here a rust-red and makes the water taste like old blood. The water does nourish, however, and it never fails, even in the iciest winter weather, so Redspring is one of the most reliable sources of water around. The Sunset Stream flows from it to feed the Starwater near its source.

Redspring has always been a shepherds' moot. Though it was abandoned for long periods when the Stonelands made these northern moors too dangerous to enter, Redspring is a booming center of expansion today. Like Dawn-gleam far to the south, it's been chosen by the Crown for new construction. A Purple Dragon garrison has been installed in its own tiny keep. It is guarding work crews who're throwing up earthen ramparts as fast as they can in a wide ring that will enclose, it is hoped, a respectable town in the future.

Many merchants are taking advantage of the Crown boon (moneys pro-



vided by the royal treasury for the building of shops and establishing businesses) and are rushing up to Redspring. Most of them have brought their own hired bodyguards, obviously not trusting the Purple Dragons to defend them against raids from the Stonelands. This trickle of traders turned into a steady stream when the Crown installed four war wizards in a newly built mansion in the center of Redspring, and the locals have watched in disbelief as each day brings new faces.

Redspring is a place of golden opportunity, but I can't recommend it as a destination for travelers yet. There's no inn, the tavern is no more than a serving window where patrons must stand out in the weather to place their orders, and there's nary a building stone to be had for miles. Workers are digging deep pits just outside the earthen walls to get more construction stone.

Redspring has a muddy morass rather than roads, and many unfinished buildings are sited here, there, and everywhere, so the chaos of transport may well continue when all building is complete. Moreover, a very hard winter or renewed Zhentarim strength may yet sweep Redspring away into rubble. (Folk have reported seeing mages flying over the growing town, observing the activities below while mounted on the fearsome beasts known as feywings.) Still, if you follow the way of Tymora or merely like to gamble, this is a place where fortunes may soon be made. Watch for a comprehensive entry on Redspring in a future edition of this guidebook.⁶

Slingdyke

This defensive earthworks stands on the west side of the Mountain Ride at the spot where the Dragon Trail to Hillmarch (and thence, the East Way) meets it. Originally the site of a hilltop fort overwhelmed by orcs in the early days of the realm, Slingdyke has been held by many forces over the years. It is named for the courageous last stand of a Purple Dragon patrol against a huge band of orcs. The Cormyrean soldiers used their slings and the rubble of the long-destroyed fort to heap the corpses of their foes around the dike by the hundreds ere they fell.

Today, all stones large enough to build with are gone, and the steep-sided hill is bare except for a beacon that Purple Dragons light to warn all who see it that orcs or other invading forces are nigh. A deep well of clear water is set into a cleft on the side of the hill that faces the Dragon Trail (the southeast side), and below it stands a lone duskwood tree.

An inn once stood on the northeast corner of the trailmoot here, but it burned down almost a decade ago. It hasn't been rebuilt by royal decree, which is something of a mystery. The reasons for the decree are rumored to have something to do with a curse or unresolved peril lurking in or above the burnt, tumbled stones of the inn. (One tale talks of an invisible door high in the air.) A Purple Dragon guardpost is located in a rather ugly little walled compound, complete with a small keep, just east of the ruins, but they refused to discuss the demise of the Slingdyke Arms with me. The guard I spoke with sug-

⁶Elminster: Future edition? Ye should live so long!



gested my curiosity would be “better employed poking about elsewhere in the realm.”

Interestingly, the only two farms within sight of Slingdyke’s ring of earthen ramparts are inhabited by one family that I’m sure are Harpers and another that look for all the world like a war wizard with a bodyguard of poorly disguised Purple Dragons. Some mystery sleeps at Slingdyke—and the whole realm may learn its secrets yet.

Though no inn or tavern remains at this place, the easternmost farm houses a competent blacksmith who’s probably a Purple Dragon. He makes a living shoeing beasts that pass on the road. The stables and paddock that once belonged to the inn, located in the southeast corner of the trailmoot, have been maintained by the Purple Dragon detachment stationed here as a campground for passersby to use for free. There’s a huge horse pond at the back of the stables, several fire pits, and ample stored straw and firewood at the ready.

A half-day’s ride south of Slingdyke is the Laughing Head, a stone marker of forgotten origins that stands just west of the road in a thicket of young felsul trees. About 12 feet tall, it is capped by a sculpted, mirthful human head and shoulders. Legend says folk present at just the right time—when the rays of the rising moon on a particular night of the year first touch the head—hear the head laugh and speak. Its words are said to be a cryptic challenge. They be combined with an inscription that appears on the front of the marker only at that special time. The words and the

inscription combined to give the directions to something or some place hidden. This thing or place is something war wizards and agents of the Crown won’t talk about but which legend insists is far older than the Sword Heralds.⁷ In fact, it may have something to do with the dragons who inhabited the lands in the area before there was a Cormyr.

Sunset Hill

Sunset Hill is named for its gold tinge at sunset, when it holds the light of the sinking sun long after the lower land around it. This high, grassy hill east of Bospir is a natural spot for a fortress, but its crown holds only sheep, though long ago gibbets stood on the hill.

It is no great surprise that Sunset Hill is haunted. Ghostly apparitions of floating, upright, dangle-headed human corpses appear on its summit on some nights. Local farmers’ lore insists that any sheep on the hill at such times are transformed into the leathery-winged monsters known as dark horrors. The dark horrors fly off to attack lone folk and livestock all over the countryside, and they change back into their bewildered sheep selves in the morning—if they survive that long.

Water is plentiful around the base of the hill. No less than three ponds are scattered about, fed by springs welling up from the heart of the hill. Many cottages cluster around the ponds, so Sunset Hill could be said to be a settlement—a far-flung hamlet without any center or governor—of about 1,000 folk.

⁷For more about the Sword Heralds, see Appendix II of this guidebook.



Yeoman Bridge

This hamlet is a cluster of farms centered on a covered bridge that gives the community its name. Yeoman Bridge carries the Immer Trail over the Sword River (also known as the River Arabel). The Sword River flows southeast from the rocky height known as Arabel Springs, just south of the city of Arabel, to join the Wyvernwater just below the bridge.

The bridge itself is an impressive stone structure adorned with sculpted stone shields displaying the arms of families ennobled for their service to the Crown in battles long ago. The bridge is composed of two 200-foot-long spans that rest on a massive natural plug of rock, an islet once crowned by an evil wizard's tower. The destruction of the tower caused a wild magic area that survives today. It forms a sphere englobing the entire bridge.

The north span of the bridge is covered with log walls and a board roof, and this shelter is often used by caravans whose wagons must stop over for a night in rain or snowstorms. The roof over the southern span collapsed some years ago under the weight of heavy winter snows, and it remains open to the sky.

Local Purple Dragons disagree with most locals as to whether this roof should be rebuilt. They say its presence would make the bridge a firetrap and provide invading forces with cover from the arrows of defenders on the southern riverbank. Some farmers also oppose the restoration of the south span's roof. They say restoring the roof would allow all travelers to shelter in the bridge overnight, bringing the scant business done by the local inn to an end.

The local inn does little trade because it's a dreadful, dirty shack whose owner, a retired Purple Dragon called Thorm Ultigar, is too large and aggressive for anyone to dare to tell him how lousy his cooking really is. He also hasn't cleaned out the chimneys since he bought the place, so smoke from the kitchen fires fills the entire roadhouse constantly.

This stellar house is called the Water Witch's Rest. The unmarked grave of a locally legendary sorceress, Aierann Yurlann, is said to lie beneath the main hearthstone in the inn's common room. Thorm takes a very dim view of guests who try to lift the stone to take a look. There's said to be a curse on the witch's coffin that causes anyone touching it to *shapechange* slowly and constantly, one limb at a time. Thorm has, however, been known to change his mind when offered a sufficient amount in gold coins (several hundred at least).

The witch's spellbooks are reputed to lie at the end of a flooded tunnel leading down from her coffin towards the lake. They are said to rest in the lair of some water monster that's slain over 20 adventurers since Thorm started counting—and burying—they in his yard. The adventurers keep coming because Aierann Yurlann is said to have perfected a *contingency shapechange* spell that she wore constantly and that saved her life in many sorcerous duels.

There's little else in Yeoman Bridge to tempt the traveler except fresh eggs and the occasional goose to be had from local farmers. The farmers may in turn wish to buy good boots (a constant need on the muddy Wyvernwater shores), tools, and other goods not made locally.



HulTail

This village of 360-odd folk is the largest port on the Wyvernwater. It is the home of the Trindar Shipyards, where almost all of the vessels that ply the vast Wyvernwater are made. It is enriched by all the trade that flows between Cormyr and the Dalelands along the Thunder River and through the High Dale. (This water route has long been the best way to enter or leave Cormyr unseen.) Vangerdahast has been increasingly concerned about this, and a war wizard, one Fractus, recently retired to study in his own tower just east of Hultail. Few doubt that he's in regular spell communication with the powers in Suzail.

Hultail is reputed to be the site of a fairy ring atop a hill, where elves dance once or twice a year. The elves dwell or sleep in the heart of the hill the rest of the time.⁸

Another colorful local legend concerns the Ring of Swords: nine black blades that rise, dripping, from the lake and flash out at Hultail's foes. It is said only a worshiper of Tempus can call them forth, and once each blade slays something, they all sink down again and cannot be found or called forth until at least nine days have passed?

Hultail is both a fishing village and a fish hatchery and it never seems to run out of fish. I've discovered what few Cormyreans know: A monster called a deepspawn, which spews forth lesser creatures more or less constantly, is kept close-guarded in the Spawnhall by the docks. It churns out fish for local tables and to sell in Suzail. Excess

fish are plowed into local farm fields to enrich them. All fish that spoil are milled into fish meal and sold to Sembian farmers.

Places of Interest in Hultail

Unique Sites

Spawnhall

This imposing structure, with its arched roof, houses Hultail's fish hatchery tanks and is guarded by no less than 40 Purple Dragons armed with hand crossbows that fire darts envenomed with sleep poison. The economic prosperity of Hultail is obviously seen as crucial to the Cormyrean hold on the sparsely settled eastern lands of the realm! Visits to the view the interior must be arranged with Lord Redbeard in Wheloon or at the Court in Suzail. Only fish meal is sold to private merchants here, at 60 gp per wagonload (wagon not included).

Shops

Trindar Shipyards

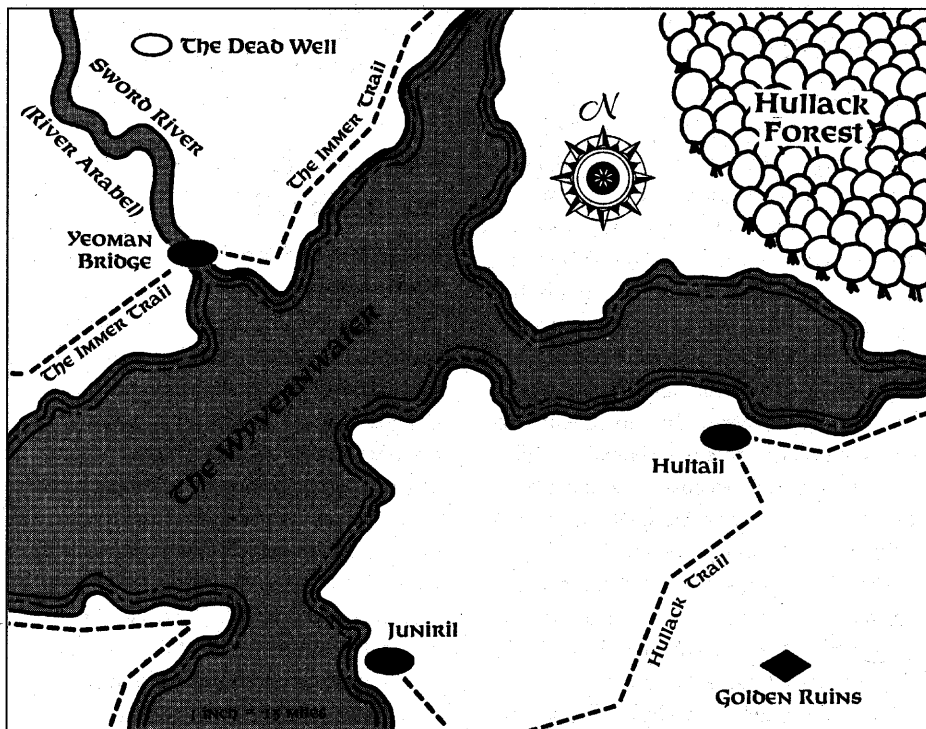
Boats, Ships, and Rafts



This famous complex of docks, sheds, cranes, and slipways looks like the aftermath of a battle, but out of its noise, piles of scrap lumber, and reigning chaos comes boat after boat of sturdy usefulness (if not beauty), used by fisherfolk on the Wyvernwater. Surdan is the senior shipmaster now, and he can turn out a small sloop in two tendays at a cost of 500 gp or

⁸*Elminster*: They do no such thing. This mistaken belief got its start long ago when Myth Drannan elves chose this site for a hilltop meeting with other elves and arrived via *gates* that seemed to humans watching from a distance to open into the hill.

⁹*Elminster*: This one's true, but anyone who knows the word of activation can call the swords up. No, I'm not giving it here, but it's graven in stone somewhere in Hultail, for those who care to go looking. They act as nine separate *blade barriers*. They fly up to half a mile from Hultail's docks and continue to strike until each blade has dealt 66 points of damage, claimed a life, or all the foes of Hultail are gone, whichever befalls first. I don't know why Tempus enacted this here. I suspect there was once a temple to him where the docks now stand.



a large raft in half that time but for the same price. He can complete a good-sized fishing boat suitable for a crew of two (can sail with up to 12 on board) in a month for 1,200 gp or more. The price goes up as the fittings and size increase.

RESTAURANTS

The Plate of Eels



I've never taken to plates of fresh, slithering freshwater eels the way coast folk in Cormyr do, but this place also serves other dishes that are not quite as revolting: roasted chicken with almonds, crayfish, clams, and freshwater fish. They serve good strong beer here, and there is not a bad view over the water, either.

Taverns

The Blue Dragon's Bones



Named for the destruction of a blue dragon on this site at the hands of a long-ago wizard, this is a typical dark-and-dirty tavern. It's rowdy but has good ale.

INNS

The Sixcandles Inn



The Sixcandles is old, and these days it relies too much on its reputation. It's looking a little frayed and worn around the edges. But, it is the only place in town to stay unless you buy—yes, buy—a house!



Juniril

This little village¹⁰ of 700 has to be the *blandest* place I've visited. Folk spend their days fishing and weaving rushes from nearby marshes. Don't expect to find excitement, though trade can be brisk if you've useful wares to sell.

I could find only two local things of interest: the High Helm and the ruins of Helm's Everpresent Shield, a temple of Helm. The High Helm is a landmark inn, tavern, and festhall. As one local put it dryly, "They decided to store all the excitement in one spot so's we can sleep in the rest." The ruins of the temple are considered sacred, so don't enter or disturb anything there.

The High Helm stands at the south edge of Juniril, and the walled stables, barracks, and jail of the Purple Dragons lie at the northern limits. The Purple Dragons keep a seven-sword contingent in the village; most are veteran female officers. All around Juniril are fruit farms among bogs. The only local peril is doppelganger attacks from the bogs. Officers pursuing the doppelgangers into the bogs have thus far fallen afoul of mimics and traps.

The temple's never been rebuilt because of the Curse of the Blood Royal. Centuries ago, brigands waylaid the



Princess Kathla Obarskyr here. Pinned to the temple doors by a sword, the dying princess choked out her curse. The temple erupted in beams of light that struck each brigand, and each beam became a sword, transfixing its victim. The curse kept the bloodthirsty fools alive, writhing in agony. None dared touch them for fear of the curse, and they staggered about Cormyr until wolves, hunger, or winter cold felled them. Tales are still told by the fireside on cold winter nights of skeletons seen stumbling around the backlands with glowing blades through them, though it always seems that friends of the tale-tellers saw the skeletons, not the speakers themselves.



¹⁰The location of Juniril and the villages and geographic features that surround it can be seen on the map found in the entry on Gladehapp, in the Coast chapter of this guidebook.



The High Helm

Tavern/Inn/Festhall



As one rides into Juniril from either road, one is immediately struck by the sight of a huge warrior's helm looming above a bend in the road. As one draws nearer, rusting rivets can be seen holding down a maze-work of edges under the silvery paint. Finally, it becomes obvious that the helm is actually an old glass-firing oven encased in cobbled-together scraps of armor just for show. It's an impressive landmark nonetheless, and many a traveler who's never laid eyes on it before finds it with ease.

The Place

Warriors think of the Helm as home, a place where they'll be welcomed and recognized. It's a warm, strangely cozy place despite the rough-hewn decor and well-used benches, tables, and chairs. The reg-

ular patrons, who are fighting men from all over the Dragonreach, love it and try hard to keep it a neutral, safe ground where feuds are set aside and all can relax.

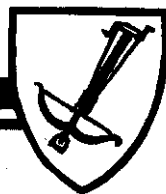
Old shields and scraps of armor are hammered to the pillars and walls to keep the risk of fire to a minimum, and the floor is a mix of gravel, marble scraps, and flagstones for the same reason. Lighting is by candle and candle lantern, with candle wheels¹¹ overhead. No less than three rather rustic staircases ascend from the sprawling, labyrinthine taproom to the floors above. I heard several Purple Dragons use the rather charitable term "wandering" to describe the stairs. The taproom is where all meals and drinks are consumed, unless one pays 5 gp per night for one of the private dining/meeting rooms behind the kitchens.

There are two floors above the taproom, and they are a regular warren of bedrooms, twisting passages, broom closets, and little bowers or alcoves where patrons can relax (perhaps in the company of a professional escort on staff). Only the gods know how the staff members find their ways around. I know I wasn't the only guest to go blundering into someone else's room (interrupting several interesting trysts— but those are tales for another time) and wander the place for quite some time, trying to find a stair back down.

The Prospect

The Helm is a good place to settle down for a tenday or so and just relax. No one bothers you. In fact, talk in the halls is discour-

¹¹A candle wheel is an old wagon wheel fitted with a ring of candles in metal bowls to catch the wax. It hangs from ceiling pulleys on chains and can readily be lowered to replace, light, or extinguish the candles. In rowdier establishments candle wheels are often lowered abruptly down atop the heads of foes as weapons.



aged; boisterous merrymaking is to be kept to the taproom or behind closed doors.

The rooms and food are simple but dependable. The place feels like home, especially after one traverses an upper passage and sees a man snoring in a chair with his feet in an adjacent chair and his boots shucked onto the floor beside him, or when one goes down to the kitchens of a morning to be passed by yawning warriors who're wearing not much more than boots and sleepy expressions! Like home, too, service is casual and friendly. However, it is only available downstairs. If you want something, you must go and get it, not ring a bell or call for a passage servant.

Priests of Helm and Tempus are on staff (as quartermaster and stablemaster, respectively) to administer to the hurts and spiritual needs of warrior guests. They tolerate not only each other but a small chapel to Tymora that opens off one end of the taproom hard by the doors to the jakes, behind the unmarked blue curtain at the south end of the room.

The Provender

Food in the Helm is apt to be of the roasts-and-stews variety, with much emphasis on beer and mustards as marinades. Small fowl on spits can be had at any time of day, and they are always good. Morningfest usually features frybread (lovely) and bacon (too salty). The rest of the day, ask for the fried potatoes in mushroom broth (superb, even cold). A cold platter of salt fish, strong cheese, and radishes can be had at any time in the kitchens (3 cp, paid on the spot).

Not surprisingly the drink is plentiful and cheap. The usual ales (bitter black, Elminster's choice, and suzale) are supplemented by Vilhon cider, clarry, and a small

selection of wines comprised of whatever the proprietors can get in from ships calling at Suzail. There is, of course, house ale and wine, too. Both are made in the stables, but it's best not to dwell too much on this. The taste of both is fine. The Helm features a thoughtful touch that many grander houses would do well to adopt: In every room, covered clay pots hold sliced nutbread, a spreading knife, and jars of nut-and-berry jam, so that one never wants for a bite. Covered jugs of mint water also stand by every bed. These touches are simple but satisfying.

The Prices

Any meal is 1 sp per platter or 2 sp per skewer. A skewer typically holds three good-sized roast fowl and as many onions or sprouts. Drinks are 4 cp per tankard or 7 sp per bottle for wine. A few, rarely available vintages can be as expensive as 12 gp per bottle. Most guests stick to the house drinks, which cost 3 cp per tankard for the ale (robust and even nutty—not bad at all) and 5 cp per tallglass or 4 sp per skin for the wine.

Rooms are 5 gp per person per night, or 3 gp per person if one shares a room with others. This price includes a house tankard or tallglass and a hot bath. Stabling is 1 gp per person extra, and there is an additional fee if a single person brings more than three beasts. The company of one of the Helm escorts is 12 to 16 gp per night.

Travelers' Lore

The Helm has become known as a good place to hire or make contact with warriors. It's also long been rumored to house many hidden caches of found treasure or accumulated pay left behind by those who did not live to return.



Thunderstone

This village of 900-odd folk swells to thrice its usual size in summer, when travel through the High Dale picks up and all manner of folk arrive to hunt or explore the Hullack Forest. (In recent years, tales have arisen of ruins in Hullack's depths, and one has been identified as the legendary Tethgard.) The inns and taverns in this frontier holding change each season, I'm afraid, and so aren't spoken of here.

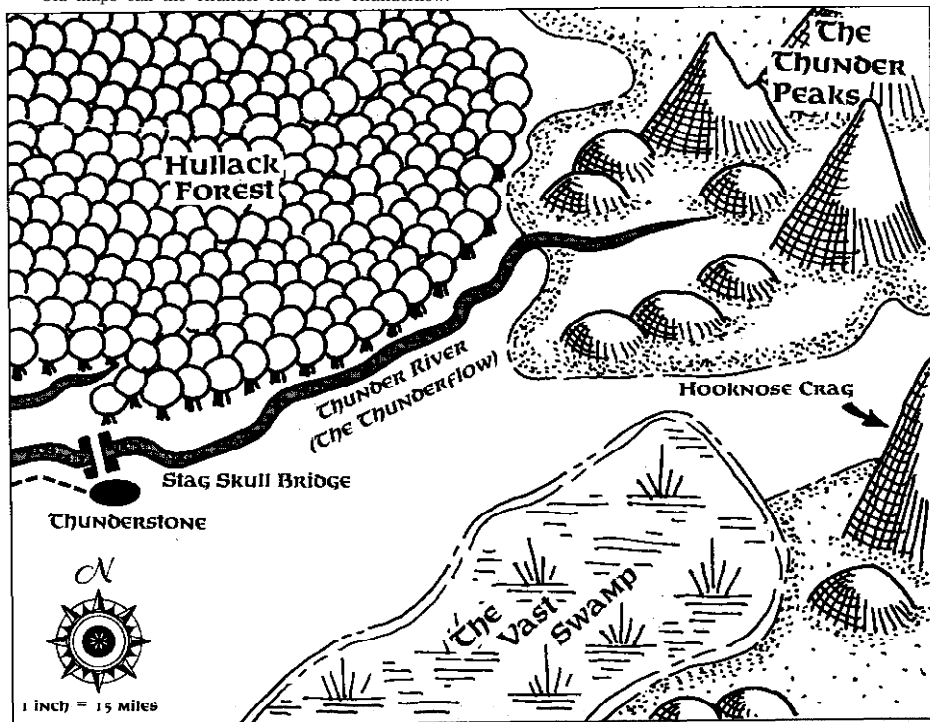
Thunderstone has a 100-sword Purple Dragon garrison, most of them wild boys who love brawls and monster-slaughtering. The hardened troops are here to stand against the perils of the forest, the nearby Thunder Peaks, and the Vast Swamp. They're under Oversword Faril Laheralson,

who largely ignores the local Crown clerk, Hurm Thiodor. So, watch your step around the Purple Dragons. They *are* the law, and there's no chance to appeal to Suzail.

Prosperous local farmer Del Geery, whose lands adjoin the swamp, is making a name as a hydra hunter by sponsoring expeditions into the swamp. He gleans many useful wares from hydra corpses.

The infamous Stag Skull Bridge spans the Thunder River¹² here, and a permanent Purple Dragon guard on the bridge prevents monster incursions south of the river. Many foresters owe their lives to these soldiers. When pursued by monsters, they collapsed—exhausted—on the bridge as the guard butchered what had been following them. Needless to say, soldiers on this duty are veteran monster slayers.

¹²Old maps call the Thunder River the Thunderflow.





Tilverton

This fast-growing town of 12,900 folk is still officially a protectorate of the Forest Kingdom. It is ruled by a Cormyrean noblewoman, Lady Regent Alasalynn Rowanmantle,¹³ and a nominally independent, locally elected Council. No one in Faerûn expects to see Cormyr's grip on Tilverton loosen voluntarily, however, and the town has a standing Purple Dragon garrison of 850 swords. They patrol constantly against monsters, brigands, and Zhentish forces.

A typical Purple Dragon patrol consists of 40 seasoned warriors commanded by a veteran officer. All ride medium war horses, wear field plate, and wield lances, maces, long swords, crossbows, and daggers. They are accompanied by one to three war wizards and 10 to 20 archers. The archers practice firing from the saddle and wear leather armor. Each has a long sword, throwing daggers, a long bow, and four quivers that each hold 21 flight arrows.¹⁴ The wizards each carry full spell complements, several scrolls, and as many as a dozen *potions of healing* in steel vials, but they don't bring their spellbooks out on patrol.

Tilverton's streets are policed by foot patrols of 10 to 20 Purple Dragons armed with slings (instead of bows and lances) and accompanied by one or two mages. No archers accompany these patrols, but 26 are always on call at one of the three city gatehouses.

When Tilverton is threatened by an attack in force, the Council may vote to call out the militia. (The lady regent and Purple

Dragons lack the authority to do so.) Its maximum muster is 470 members, including local adventurers, trappers, and hunters who know the countryside well. The militia is trained in riding and arms.

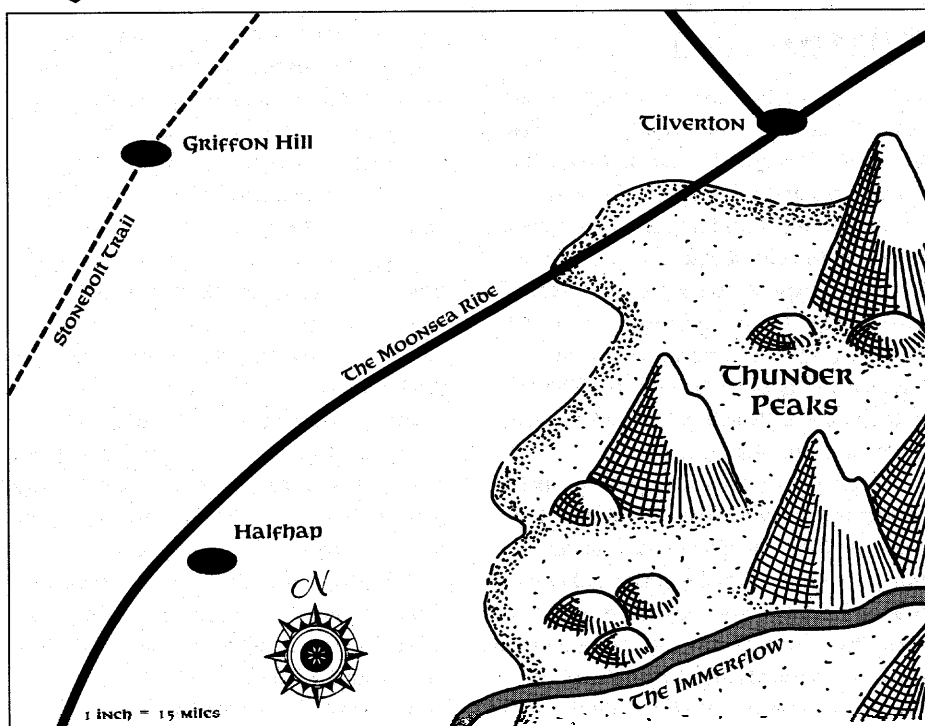
If all this seems more like an armed camp than a settlement, that's not far wrong. Tilverton is Cormyr's armed bastion in the northeast, shielding the Forest Kingdom against unhampered raids from all sorts of foes. Tilverton is imperiled by the Rogues of Tilverton, a mysterious group known as the Fire Knives, and Zhent agents from within and threatened by orc hordes, marauding monsters, large brigand bands, and Zhentilar armies and hired mercenaries from without.

Tilverton's longtime use as a base for those prospecting, logging, hunting, and exploring in the wilderness around continues, and it has always been an important supply center for travelers using Tilver's Gap. Today, Tilverton exports local pottery, gems, furs, and hardy hill horses. The gems are mined in the mountains to the south and (especially) the northwest, and the furs come from beasts trapped in nearby forests. The hill horses are medium war horses bred, trained, and doctored locally. The beasts bred by the ex-Purple Dragon Brieth Tanalar are famous.

Tilverton is a roughly circular walled town with concentric streets that follow the general shape of the city wall. This overall pattern is transected by the Moonsea Ride, which passes through the city east and west. The overall concentric pattern is also broken by the road that becomes the Northride, running out of the

¹³Alasalynn Rowanmantle is also a former Purple Dragon officer.

¹⁴One quiver is worn, and the other three are attached to the saddles of the horses that the archers ride.



city to the north to Shadow Gap. It meets the Moonsea Ride at a market in the city's center. In the market stands the slender Council Tower, a useful navigational landmark for newcomers. The southwestern third of the city rises above the rest and is separated from it by an internal wall. It occupies a fortified knoll, where the oldest part of town stands, and is accessed from the rest of the town by four entrances: three staircases and a gate.

Not long ago, Tilverton was a small, muddy town of drovers' stockyards and caravan campgrounds around a knoll crowned by a few grand homes, a ruined keep, and the temple of Gond (then called Gharri's House). Old, battered stone houses and many leaning wooden shanties ringed the stockyards.

Then Cormyr came. Faced by Lashan's expanding empire and increasing orc and Zhentilar raids, Cormyr moved to secure Tilver's Gap, sending unrequested aid to the beleaguered town in the form of a permanent garrison. The stockyards and grounds were torn down in favor of new construction and relocated outside a hastily built earthen ridge and ditch (which is now a stone wall), the shanties were replaced by stout stone buildings, and opportunistic Cormyreans by the hundreds settled in.

Locals who grumbled then about being "stamped under Azoun's boots" have largely fallen silent as the influx of Cormyrean soldiers, merchants, and trade has enriched them and the wall has (at last!) afforded protection against



raiding brigands and monsters. Other citizens, such as Gharri (of Gond), were unhappy under the iron hand of Duke Bhereu, the cousin of Ring Azoun who was sent to govern the town, and left. However, soon after Lashan's fall, Bhereu returned to his normal duties. A restless Suzailan noblewoman was made regent, and some of those who had left returned.

Tilverton has always been a dangerous frontier town of adventurers and ready magic, where the lost hoards of adventurers who went on one expedition too many and never came back have been hidden over the years. Now, it's a bustling town of fast-gathering coins and growing culture. Two prominent mages call Tilverton home: the respected sage Filani of Tantras and Gahlaerd Mossmere, a researcher of new spells who is rumored to aid the Rogues of Tilverton (the local thieves' guild).¹⁵

The Rogues are now the only local outlaw band. The organized Zhentarim and Dragon Cult agents have all been slain or driven out. In recent years, the Rogues did face competition from the sinister Fire Knives, but they have reportedly now all left or been destroyed.

The Knives were linked with the fallen god Moander and dwelt in the town sewers. The Rogues inhabit the sewers now, and their group is believed to number over 70 thieves, aided by local merchants. These merchants escape heavy thefts by providing cooperation and information.

The Rogues have been led by the Grossman family for decades. At present, their leader is the beautiful and wily Lhaerae "the Lithe" Grossman, daughter of the notorious

Artur "the Fat Man" (believed deceased). Lhaerae, who possesses incredible dexterity and acting ability played no open part in the Rogues until recently. Instead she used her beauty and wits to infiltrate the local clergy of Gond and then the Cormyrean garrison to gather information for the Rogues—and to gather the occasional gold coin or magical item for herself.

Landmarks

It is unlikely that most visitors to Tilverton will to cross paths with Lhaerae and her ilk,¹⁶ and so they can warily tour this city-to-be. The most interesting part of Tilverton is the Old Town. In Old Town, things aren't as crowded as elsewhere in Tilverton, and new construction is forbidden except by special vote of the Council. Old Town can be reached by climbing the Cormyr Stairs, the Market Stairs, the Tilver Stairs or by entering through the Upper City Gate.

The Cormyr Stairs are located in the west by the Cormyr Gate. They feature a covered landing with an Altar of Shields consecrated as a shrine to the god Helm. The Market Stairs connect directly with the market in the center of Tilverton and have a covered landing containing the Rose Altar, consecrated as a shrine to the god Lathander. The Tilver Stairs on the east¹⁷ carry the Street of the Sorceress into the Old Town. They sport a garden-ringed Green Altar landing that is consecrated to Silvanus.

Those who don't like steps or halting to worship can take Gateguard Road off the Street of the Sorceress and journey

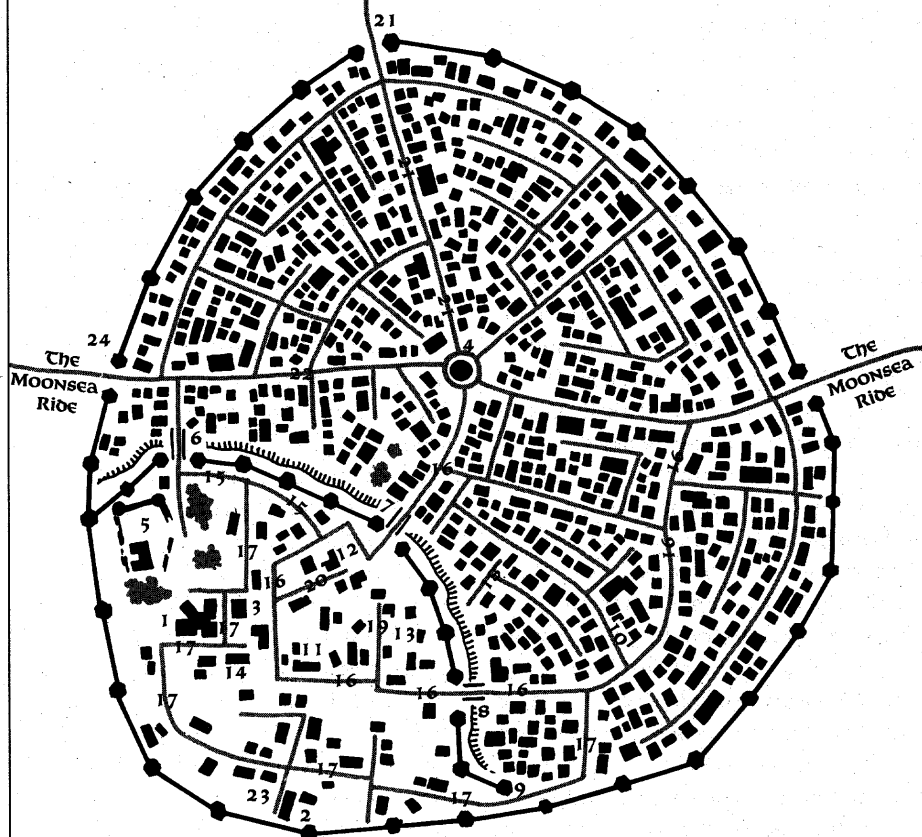
¹⁵Both of these wizards are detailed in Appendix I of this guidebook.

¹⁶However, one is advised to beware the company of stunningly beautiful women who want to dance at the Flagon Held High—their fingers may be lighter than their feet.

¹⁷They are actually located in the southern part of Tilverton but are easternmost of all of these staircases.



Tilverton





Tilverton Map Key

1. The House of the Wonderbringer (temple of Gond Wondermaker; formerly Gharri's House)
2. The Windlord's Rest (inn)
3. Tower of Wits and Work (Filani the Sage)
4. The market (with the Council Tower at its center)
5. Tilver's Palace (ruined keep)
6. Cormyr Stairs and Altar of Shields (shrine to Helm)
7. Market Stairs and Rose Altar (shrine to Lathander)
8. Tilver Stairs and Green Altar (shrine to Silvanus)
9. Upper City Gate and the Hand of Chance (shrine to Tymora)
10. Dundar's Fine Blades
11. Grimwald's Revenge (inn)
12. Whispering Witch (inn)
13. The Flagon Held High (tavern)
14. Jonstyl's Banner (rooming house)
15. Knights' Ride
16. Street of the Sorceress
17. Gateguard Road
18. Drakar Lane
19. Phorn's Lane
20. Haddock Row
21. The Northride
22. Tanalar's Fine Mounts
23. Undreir Facilitations
24. The Cormyr Gate

along the city wall, entering the Old Town through Upper City Gate along the south wall of the city. There they can easily push past the Hand of Chance shrine of Tymora if they're not of that faith.

Once inside the gardenlike Old Town, the visitor should look at the ruined Tilver's Palace in the northwestern corner of the heights this district occupies. This former abode of Tilvara remains undisturbed largely because of its Medusa's Garden, a forest of petrified people and monsters that animate like gargoyles to attack any intruders. Weird spell lights drift and flash about inside the ruins, and few who steal in survive to see the outside of the crumbling walls again. One warrior claims to have fought off a watchghost to gain his freedom; he says he also saw beholders or other spherical, many-eyed beings floating about in the depths. Powerful wards prevent all known divination and scrying magics from penetrating the ruin.

The next street east of the ruined keep, reached by taking the short curving avenue of Knights' Ride, is the wide arc of Gate-

guard Road, which goes around the keep grounds in a sharp dogleg. On the outside (east) of this bend stand the house of Filani the Sage, which she wryly calls the Tower of Wits and Work, and the former site of the Windlord's Rest inn, now a rooming house. In the angle of the dogleg is the House of the Wonderbringer, the town's large temple of Gond (formerly Gharri's House).

Those who follow Gateguard Road along toward the Upper City Gate pass the new Windlord's Rest inn. They should appreciate that in its new location it's about as isolated from the bustle of Tilverton as it can get.

Knights' Ride also links up with the Street of the Sorceress, which runs in a rather tortured loop inside Gateguard Road from the Market Stairs to the Tilver Stairs. The dead-end spur of Phorn's Lane runs off the loop just west of the Tilver Stairs, and on this lane stands the Flagon Held High, Tilverton's only tavern—though there are plenty of drink wagons that travel the streets and alleys each night. Many visitors and citizens alike hasten here every



night for a little roistering and chatter.

Handy to the west, in the angle of the loop of the Street of the Sorceress, is Grimwald's Revenge inn. The Whispering Witch inn stands on Haddock Row, the next side street off the loop before the Knights' Ride intersects it.

Places of Interest in Tilverton

Temples

The House of the Wonderbringer

This large temple to the god Gond Wondermaker was formerly known as Gharri's House. It was named after High Priest Gharri, an elder of the town who was later lord regent before his disappearance. It's now led by High Artificer Burlan Almaether. Burlan directs over 40 priests in devising new inventions in worship of the god. One notable recent innovation has been the float valve, wherein rising liquid levels in an enclosure cause a floating item to trigger a switch, typically to shut off the flow of additional water.

This temple attracted many clergy in Gharri's days. He was regarded as an important servant of Gond who had a personal relationship with the god. There is great interest in seeing how Burlan Almaether performs. People are eager to learn if he too will develop a close relationship to Gond, ensuring the temple's greatness and the place of Tilverton in Faerûn.

Shops

Dundar's Fine Blades

Weaponsmith and Toolsmith



Formerly Dundar's Pine Swords, this shop

has recently expanded its wares to include axes, scythes, and saws. Dundar is a warrior of skill who tutors warriors in the use of blades for fees. At such times, his sister Andalara takes over the shop, finishing blades and making scabbards. Andalara is a ranger and Harper who roams the nearby wilderness with six half-elf warriors, collecting prized game and rare woods. Her band also hunts down orcs and other evils that manage to slink past the Purple Dragon patrols.

Tanalar's Fine Mounts

Horsebreeder



This is the office of Brieth Tanalar, the famous local horsebreeder. His horses are bought by folk from as far away as Calimshan to be used as riding horses, for racing, and for stud. He is suspicious of strangers, and the world seems all too full of horse thieves to him. He can afford to charge what he likes and to refuse to sell to folk he doesn't take to. (Merchants should take note.)

Undreir Facilitations

Second-hand Goods and Fence



This discreetly signboarded, narrow shop stands across a side lane from the Windlord's Rest. It is the office of the fat, grasping merchant Phidalpar Undreir, a less-than-scrupulous merchant and dealer in second-hand goods whose shrewd operations have made him very rich. Though not one of the Rogues, Phidalpar employs similar tactics. He has at least a dozen bodyguards



armed with sleep-poisoned darts and daggers in his shop or nearby. He is always willing to fence “awkward” items for adventurers or hire them for this or that “simple, little job.”

Taverns

The Flagon Held High



This colorful place is a sort of ongoing festival. Nearly everyone in Tilverton, the high and the low, comes here to buy drinks, laugh at joke-tellers, dancers, and minstrels, and gossip. Professional escorts and thieves work the crowd that spills out into Phorn’s Lane every night, and each night amused but watchful Purple Dragons

direct lost, drink-befuddled outlanders back to their inns from the ongoing party.

By tradition, the law looks the other way a lot at the Flagon, and one can see a lot of drunken stunts, merriment, brawling, and amorous flirtation in the crowded but somehow always light-hearted house. Everything is clean and new since the recent rebuilding after a fire, and the cellars¹⁸ boast as good a selection of beers as any tavern of the first rank anywhere in Faerûn. It is not, however, the place for a quiet evening.

Inns

Tilverton has over four dozen rooming houses, with more opening every summer. They quickly fill up in the summer

¹⁸The cellars are now loaded via their own winchway that takes huge tuns of beer on rails from the end of Drakar Lane, below the knoll, into the side of the knoll beneath the tavern.



with hunters and horse traders. In winter they are empty of all but trappers, adventurers come to try their luck in the Stonelands, and off-duty soldiers who'd like a room for a quiet dice game or two away from watchful officers. Though alley-window kitchens are beginning to spring up, serving soups and hot buns to buyers passing on the street, Tilverton's inns are still its only real restaurants. For this reason and out of familiarity, most short-term visitors to Tilverton still head for one of the three inns in town.

Grimwald's Revenge



The Revenge is owned by the Rogues of Tilverton, and it earns them a fairly steady income. They use it for meeting caravan masters willing to bring needed supplies and to take away booty that would be too easily recognized so that it can be sold elsewhere. The Revenge is soundproofed and honeycombed with secret panels and passages, allowing Rogues to easily rob paying guests. Be warned!

The inn is named for the threatened vengeance of the wizard Grimwald on those who transformed an unspecified but beautiful creation of his. The revenge threat was that he would turn his enemies into frogs and seize their worldly goods. The inn's prices are indeed high, and there *are* a lot of frogs hopping about, but as far as I know there are no known instances of guests disappearing.

The inn is run by a jovial, cosh-carrying thief known as Hasantasser Blood-

shoulder. He keeps caged frogs, releasing one to wander whenever the Rogues pull off a major theft. Two frogs with large yellow back-markings have sealed packets of *dust of disappearance* glued to their bellies for use by Rogues in distress.

My investigations confirm local rumors: All newel and banister knobs in the inn twist off in a certain way to reveal handy storage niches. Each of these holds a dagger, a garrote, a black silk face mask and a packet of the vanishing dust used by the Rogues.

The Revenge is connected to the sewers by several concealed ways. I'd hate to be a Purple Dragon attacking the place, and I must confess I was uneasy just staying there as a guest. Stay at Grimwald's Revenge at your own risk.

The Whispering Witch



This is a dark, cozy establishment where unexplained sounds are often heard and spells go off behind closed doors. The Witch is owned and run by two sisters who seem at first sinister enough, but I can be the first to tell the world that they're not Rogues or crazed cultists, but undercover Harpers!¹⁹

Aluana and Jhansabella Nithrin are both mages. Their cook, the balding and bearded Alstigar the Silent, is secretly a bard and so is their stablemaster, Khel-drar Ghaudelar.

The Windlord's Rest



This formerly small, cozy inn has moved

¹⁹Elminster: My, ye're helpful. Why not reveal the true names and locations of the Seven Lost Heirs while ye're at it? It'll cut down on the civil wars and the rush of adventurers deluded into rightful claims on thrones. I suppose saving all those lives would be too helpful by half. Aye, everyone on staff at the Whispering Witch is a Harper.



to a labyrinth of interconnected former homes and shops linked by drafty, uneven-floored passages. It is now located hard by the town wall in the southernmost spot in Tilverton. Though even the staff sometimes get lost in this dimly lit warren, the Rest is still warmed by the wise and kindly nature of its owner, the retired illusionist Thungor Triblane, a gnome of balding head but a magnificent beard and bristling brows.

Thungor believes in adopting guests as unofficial family members, dispensing advice, directions, slippers for damp feet, scoldings, and pocket money as if patrons were his errant children. This irritates a few folk beyond belief, but

most love it and become loyal clients who send deposits ahead to secure a favored chamber or suite and even pay extra when Thungor hands them their bill after a stay.

Thungor had to move the Rest largely because the old place was too small to squeeze in half the returning guests who wanted to stay there. The old location is now a rooming house, Jonstyl's Banner, run by a crippled dwarven ex-adventuress.²⁰ Thungor still pays Jonstyl to give parlor space to a pair of shy gnome runners. Their only task is to lead folk who come to Jonstyl's door expecting to see Thungor instead to the new Windlord's Rest.

²⁰Jonstyl wants readers to know that she caters especially to adventurers. She offers discreet lodging and services, can obtain *potions of healing* for injured guests, and can provide disguises, mounts, and meals swiftly and at all hours.





The West Reaches



his mountainous backside of the realm of Cormyr (as a long-ago sage called it), is often neglected by Cormyrean and traveler alike. The visitor who doesn't venture to the west reaches of the realm misses much of the beauty of the Forest Kingdom. Its mist-shrouded upland meadows and pine forests are exquisite, if often deadly. Despite Cormyr's ever-growing strength, this is still monster country.

Mapping the Stonelands and the Storm Horns provides a few trusted adventuring bands with a steady source of income. However, many valleys and high meadows in the Storm Horns remain unexplored or mapped today despite the diligent work of scrying war wizards and hired adventurers sent to follow up on what a mage has seen from afar.

Waystops and Holdings

Settlements in the Storm Horns are scarce. Each can be crucial to travelers' survival, especially if they're being trailed by brigands or orc bands, but that doesn't make these places wildly entertaining to visit or worthy of detailed entries in this book. A few of these places are vital waystops, but they still aren't any prettier or better equipped than they absolutely need be. Such places are mentioned briefly in this section for the reference of travelers trying to stay alive:

Eagle Peak

This fortified trade town offers a base for merchants and adventurers bold enough to enter the Farsea Marshes or Tunland. The more prudent stay here, and the Marsh Drovers of the Farsea Marshes come to them, selling their Death Cheese (made from catoblepas milk) in the marketplace. One-pound blocks cost 2 gp each in the Peak, rather than the 5 gp that Aurora's Catalogue Shops and most other outlets typically charge. Less well-known, but even tastier, is the delicately herbed Deadeye Butter, also made from catoblepas milk. The market is also notable for the hill sheep, mountain goats, and furs to be had here, as well as the usual assortment of tools, hardware, and furniture brought by caravans.

Eagle Peak is home to a Purple Dragon garrison of 600, here "bored in the back of beyond" as their mournful trail song puts it. They protect Cormyr's backside from Zhent, Tun brigand, and orc horde attacks.

It's a bleak place, kept all of stone, tile, and slate to prevent fires from being started by incendiary missiles in a siege and to aid in the resetting of the many warning wards everywhere when they are triggered. The Peak's best-kept secrets are its tiny walled gardens, where residents nurture their own small slices of verdant woodland. Typically these plots hold a tiny pump-fed pool surrounded by ferns, mosses, shrubs, and a few trees carefully pruned and tied to grow bushy and



stunted, curving over to roof in the garden with their boughs. Residents use these private bowers to dine in, court in, and to entertain friends or honored guests.

The Peak doesn't have inns or taverns as they're known elsewhere in Cormyr but rather hot food shops, stables, and rooming houses. The traveler must use these services separately. The Eagle Peak stables guarantee mounts. If mounts are lost or stolen while in their care, they give the owners replacements that are as good or better than what was lost as can be managed.

High Horn

High Horn is the name of the highest point in the Dragonjaw line of peaks and of the magnificent castle that surmounts it, guarding the pass through the Storm Horns that is Cormyr's western gate. Not as crucial to the survival of the realm as it once it was, High Horn is still the mightiest castle in the Forest Kingdom.

The fortress now occupies the entire peak, which has been sculpted into a formidable barrier. The castle is ringed by a moat and a wall, around which is the inner ward of barracks, granaries, and deep wells. The inner ward has its own moat and ring wall, and around this is the outer ward, with its stables, armories, smithies, and storerooms. The outer ward has, in turn, its own moat and wall. The wall has three gates, all leading down to the main road, a thousand feet below, by means of their own trails. Outside the outer ward's wall are small fortified guesthouses for the use of travelers who need the rather forbidding protection of the Horn for a night's stopover. These guesthouses are staffed by rather gruff Purple Dragons.

Few outlanders or Cormyreans have seen the magnificent banquet hall in the heart of the castle. The lord high commander of High Horn orders most of his "guests" to the dungeons deep inside High Horn to await the pleasure of expert war wizard interrogators. Only war wizards and Purple Dragons are normally allowed inside the Horn itself.

Huthduth

The small keep of Huthduth lies in a small wooded valley east of the road where the High Road breaks out of heavy mountains and turns southwest amid rolling hills two day's ride west of High Horn. Home to a monastic community that worships Chauntea, Huthduth is known for its warrior-priests and its generous attitude toward food. Any travelers are given free lodging for up to three nights and as much food as they want from the rather meager local menu of mutton, lamb, mountain berries, parsnip wine, parsnips, and alpine sprouts. The priests like to hear news of the world around, and in return they speak of the abandoned mines, old dwarf holds, ruins, monster lairs, and treasure sites they know of in the surrounding mountains. Huthduth is named for its founder, a simple and long-dead monk whose phantom still appears at some rituals to Chauntea, watching and smiling.

The priests defend their flocks of sheep, which are allowed to wander, through the use of spells that allow them to scry particular sheep from afar and teleport themselves in groups to the location of any particular sheep. Orcs, monsters, or hungry adventurers thinking to strike down a sheep suddenly find themselves sur-



rounded and under attack by a grim band of mace-wielding priests in chain mail. The penalty for killing a temple sheep is a forfeit of 1,000 gp. Those without funds enough to pay must give up items of the priests' choice and/or perform a service. The required service is typically to slay particular local menace the priests haven't gotten around to dealing with yet.

There's some sort of secret about Huthduth, too, that I was unable to learn. A feeling of slumbering power permeates the old keep, and I saw at least one spell of awesome power hurled, which tells me that at least one archmage resides there. Perhaps the Crown of Cormyr keeps some secret weapon, heir, or force here—or perhaps it's something Suzail knows nothing about. I await news from some diligent reader of his or her discovery of what's hidden in the House of Huthduth. In a future edition of this guidebook, perhaps, I'll be able to set down the truth about Huthduth.

Old Axe

South of Skull Crag, the High Road passes close to a sharply upthrust peak. This is the Old Axe, and in its shadow lies a mining hamlet of the same name. The buildings the traveler can see from the road are a ghost town, abandoned after repeated orc and hobgoblin raids. The few folk who still dwell here inhabit a few caves in Old Axe itself that have been walled off to make them secure against surface intruders. The folk who dwell here were reluctant to reveal their true numbers—how *few* they really were, actually, as only about 70 or 80, as far as I could make out, still live here. The mines here go deep into the heart of

the earth. More than once the miners have broken through into tunnels and caverns of the Underdark and had to battle the monsters of the dark places.

Still the dogged persist, bolstered by no less than seven war wizards provided by Vangerdahast, along with hired adventuring bands. The iron in these mines is unusually pure and is vital to Cormyr's army. This has long been so and is how the mountain got its name. From time to time the miners find curious veins of hardened clay that contain suspended gravel and rubies. Some of these stones have been as large as a hen's egg, but most are of fingernail size or smaller. Merchants with goods to sell will find the miners wonderful buyers, and travelers with mining skills or swords to hire out, of course, may find work in Old Axe—dangerous work.

The delvers of Old Axe usually grow rich enough to retire elsewhere while they're still young enough to enjoy it, though some come to love the place and stay on. Every year, the miners set up stalls in Suzail offering maidens thousands in gold if they'll come to Old Axe to be a "miner's maid" (a romantic companion) for a year. They entertain few respondents, and fewer still stay the course.

However, that may be changing. There's word that a lady, Alatha "Firehair" Bloodil, has risen to lead the miners. She is going to come to Suzail herself to recruit women so that her community can grow in size and not dwindle to a war wizard-guarded outpost. Whatever the future of Old Axe may be, it has little to offer the traveler but a sheltered camp, pure drinking water, and whatever aid a war wizard feels like giving.



Skull Crag

This large fortified village of over 2,000 folk fills a flat-topped spur of Old Blind Mage Mountain and overlooks the High Road, commanding a view up and down it for miles. This location makes Skull Crag an ideal military base. Over half the Crag's folk are Purple Dragons who patrol up and down the road and in the skies over the Storm Horns. To patrol the air, they use a flight of hippogriffs and the aid of a tower staffed by no less than nine war wizards.

All this military might protects anyone else settling here. Shepherds and miners have both come in force, claiming the rolling fields north of the village and Old Blind Mage Mountain, respectively. They feed local mouths with meat to spare and

delve for iron, nickel, and copper. Excess meat is preserved by magic and sold to passing merchants. Local miners speak of a lost mine in the peaks east of Old Blind Mage, but no one in living memory has found it. Expeditions that set out to search for it are growing increasingly dangerous as peryton and other predators move into the area, attracted by the continued presence of numerous sheep and humans.

Adventurers are being hired to scour the mountain heights of monsters and go seeking lost mines and caverns. There's even local talk of using titanic magic to blast a pass east right through the Storm Horns into Cormyr's heartlands through the low mountains south of the Crag. This plan gives many Purple Dragon officers fits whenever they hear of it.



Greatgaunt

Named for the old and respected Cormyrean military family who founded it,¹ this fortified town of 4,000-odd folk stands on a rocky plateau overlooking the High Road. It lies on the road's east side just where the road, running north from the Bridge of Fallen Men, first enters the foothills of the Storm Horns.

Greatgaunt is notable as the site of the Moon Dance, a monthly gathering of devotees of Selûne that has grown into something of a trade fair and as the home of Tansard Famwell, the Singer Among the Harpies, a youth so skilled that he can offset harpy charming by his singing. An accomplished mimic, Tansard is available for hire as an impersonator. He once played the part of Vangerdahast so well that he almost plunged the war wizards into a scandal. He's been warned not to repeat similar performances on pain of death for treason or having his vocal cords cut, but there *are* rumors. . . .

Landmarks

Greatgaunt is dominated by Greatgard, the huge castle that stands at the south end of the walled city, frowning down from the full height of the ramparts and the cliff below at the road. Its walls are crowded with espringales, catapults, and trebuchets of huge size that can hurl loads of rock for almost a mile along the road south of the town. There are even said to be bombards behind some of the downsloping fire chutes that can rake the ground below the walls. More importantly the town has a long and proud tradition of superb archery, and on-duty archers practice shooting at mark

poles outside the walls for several hours a day. Defenders on the town walls have been known to shoot attackers who're so distant that they're almost at the limits of human sight out of their saddles. Greatgard has held off orc hordes and even Zhentilar attacks. It is growing in importance as a military base as the Tun bandits grow more powerful and Cormyr looks to expand into Tunland.

The Greatgaunt family home, Greatgates Manor, stands at the north end of the plateau above a ravine so broken and jagged that no attacking force has ever come from that direction. This small castle boasts magnificent windows on its inner walls that look down into a courtyard. These stained glass windows display the family arms, a right-hand gauntlet clutching a dove in its fist. The courtyard holds a fountain enchanted with spells that heat the water to provide hot water year-round and prevent its freezing in winter. It's known as the Steaming Fountain due to the vapor that streams from it when the air around is cold. Citizens of the town can come to it to draw water at anytime, since the pumps for the deep wells in the market at the other end of town often freeze up in harsh winter storms.

Space within the walls is at a premium, and the visitor won't find many trees. The town is a succession of tall, slate-roofed houses crowded together, wall touching wall, along narrow cobbled lanes. Bronze handrails, green with age, are set into the walls everywhere to allow walkers to use the sloping parts of a street in icy weather. And yes, the children of the town delight in sliding down icy streets at high speed on their backsides or borrowed shields until they crash into a prepositioned bale of straw—or a wall, barrel, or cart.

¹Greatgaunts are battlemasters and garrison commanders in the Purple Dragons today.



Facing Greatgard across the large open marketplace² at the south end of town is Moonrise House, the local temple to Selûne. Founded only about a decade ago by a charismatic priestess, the beautiful Marijel Dhallard (formerly of Selgaunt), the temple is fast growing into a force for growth and harmonious living with the cycles of nature in Greatgaunt. The temple also lends support to those who either must or choose to work at night, sleeping the day through. As devout worshipers love the moonlight best, they now make up a substantial portion of the Night Watch³ and the Purple Dragons serving on dark-duty shifts.

Selûnians have festivals at every full moon and solemn sacrificial rituals where silver statuettes are melted in flames at every moondark (new moon). They believe in planting⁴ and beginning craftwork as the moon waxes, and in cleaning, cooking, and doing chores as the moon wanes. This makes Greatgaunt interesting to visit. Many folk are asleep no matter what the time of day is, the streets are never crowded, and buildings have heavily padded shutters and thick walls to deaden sound, making it a peaceful place for travelers used to the noise and crowding of most walled towns.

Places of Interest in Greatgaunt

Shops

The Shield of Glory

Armor and Weaponry



This well-stocked armor and weaponry shop is just the place for an adventurers or armsmasters to outfit themselves in everything from leather underbreeches to full tourney coat-of-plate. The only arrows in the place are a few incredibly expensive enchanted *arrows of slaying*. (Other smaller shops in town deal exclusively in bows and arrows.) Almost every other personal weapon or accoutrement can be had here. Lances are surprisingly good sellers, and the proprietor, the dwarf armorer Narthalin, is especially proud of his belts of six matched-balance *everbright* daggers (20 gp a set, firm).

Local legend insists that the cellar caverns of the Shield have been used for centuries by the Greatgaunt family as an armory. The caverns are said to include an access *gate* to an ancient refuge created for the Greatgaunts long ago by the mysterious Sword Heralds.⁵ Narthalin refuses to discuss this. It is supposedly also reachable via a certain closet in Greatgard and a hidden passage in Greatgates Manor.

Taverns

The Twelve Dancing Knights



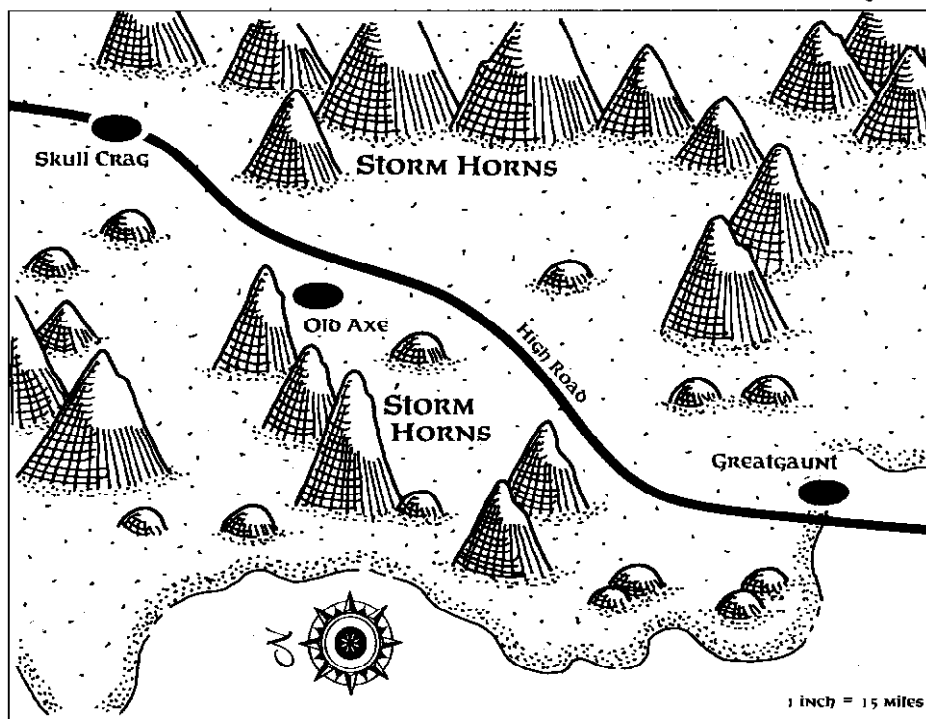
This quaint old tavern's name is derived from some lines about it in a ballad by the long-dead bard Shalivarr of Iriaebor. The couplet has been ornately carved on a large plaque over the door:

²It's a livestock fair. Drovers are allowed to camp with their beasts in the center, among much dung and straw, so only a single ring of booths is allowed in the market.

³The Night Watch is Greatgaunt's shop and market police force, active only from dusk to dawn. Purple Dragons police the town during the day.

⁴Usually in the small roadside fields below the town.

⁵See Appendix II of this guidebook for more about the Sword Heralds and their creations.



*O, twelve bold knights here made merrie,
And when they left, a-dancing they be.*

Shalivarr's song refers to some rowdy nobles of early Cormyr. It's easy to see what they liked about the smoky, warm-hearthed taproom within: plentiful drink served promptly and carefully by handsome men and comely maids, cozy booths adorned with old weapons and battle regalia of the realm, and platters of free hand food on every board. The hand food treats served here include grapes, butter biscuits, wedges of strong cheese, and slices of cold spiced sausage. The Twelve Dancing Knights is a thoroughly enjoyable, if simple, thirst-slaying house and is highly recommended.

Several old, retired miners and soldiers spend days gaming here by the fire. They love to tell stories of mountain lore, dragon treasure, and past battles to those who'll buy them a pint of bitter black.

INNS

The Old Bucket Drops



The Old Bucket is not a bad inn, but it is a trifle overpriced. No food is served, and the only drink to be had is water from the ewers of wash water in each room. However, for 3 sp you can have a hot bath in your room in a copper carry-tub that has been filled by a line of servants dumping steaming kettles.



Hornshield

This isolated, formidable mountain keep was once the fortress home of the noble family whose name it bears. That family died out some 70-odd winters ago, and since then it has housed a collection of artisans. These artisans are the descendants of workers who served the last, eccentric Duke Hornshield.

Hornshield Keep is a huge building that almost fills a narrow cleft high up on Mount Shalandragar. It can be reached only by crossing a perilous, windswept bridge linking it with one shoulder of the mountain. This 90-foot-long span is lit by rows of flickering lanterns at night and is watched at all times by archers. It is also defended by a ballista aimed to hurl heavy javelins the length of its run. Attackers must be able to leap very high or hang from the underside of the bridge and get back up again to avoid it, and a 200-foot drop awaits them if they fall!⁷

In times of trouble, defenders crank massive stone support rams back into the keep walls, and the hinged bridge falls away from the keep to slam against the shoulder of Eastmount (the eastern flank of Mount Shalandragar), hurling anyone on it down into the cleft.⁸ When it is safe to do so, the bridge is winched up into place again by means of massive steel chains. These afford away into the fortress too, but flaming oil or *heat metal* spells can render them perilous in the extreme.

Today Hornshield is a small but thriving community of brasscasters, locksmiths, glassblowers and glasscutters, chainmakers, and armorers. The pride and specialty of the glassworkers is preframed windows. These are sold, frame and all, in the cities of Cormyr and nearby coastal cities around the Lake of Dragons. Much of these craftsfolk's raw materials and finished produce are whisked to and from certain warehouses in Suzail by a small staff of well-paid wizards. At least one of these mages is always a spy for the war wizards. She or he is stationed here to ensure that no enemy of the realm takes control of, or is illicitly outfitted by, the armorers here.

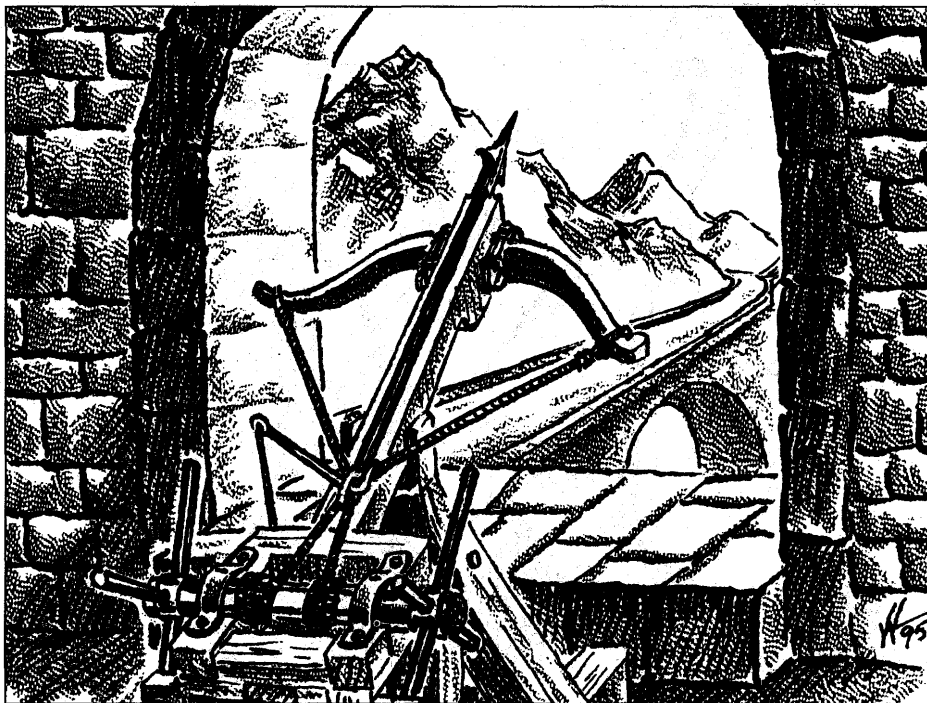
All of the families of Hornshield dwell in various rooms of the labyrinthine keep, governing themselves through a collective council of elders. They devote their attentions to security, work, and profit. Rooftop glass-roofed food gardens are a current interest and are being constructed to lessen the community's dependence on outside food. A spring in the depths of the keep provides drinking water, and the folk of Hornshield use it to brew a strange-tasting, potent mushroom mash ale that is very much an acquired taste. At first sip, it seems like one is drinking furry, moldy water!

Prominent families in Hornshield include the Nelduks, the Seshores, and the Tilthar. Hornshielders have little use for dreamers and idlers. They take great pride

⁶King Rhigaerd II awarded the family a dukedom in recognition of its valiant efforts in driving out brigands from the surrounding peaks.

⁷Either of these feats requires a successful Dexterity ability check to perform and a successful Strength ability check to hang on or land properly. (Unless one is a thief, in which case a climb walls roll can be substituted for the Strength check.) Failure in either one means the character is caught on the bridge and struck by a javelin that inflicts 5d6 points of damage. Failure in both rolls means a fall from the bridge onto the rocks far below.

⁸A player character clinging to the bridge would be battered for 4d4 points of impact damage, and forced to make both a Strength ability check and a saving throw vs. paralysis. If either roll fails, the character is smashed free of the bridge to fall into the cleft below.

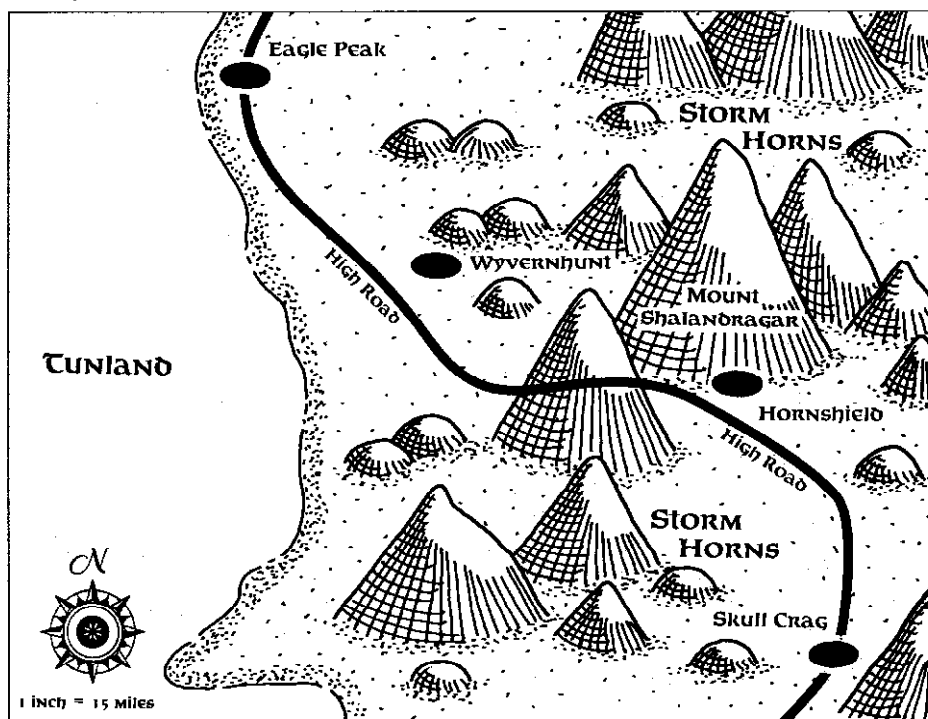


in their own efficiency and output, referring to themselves as “the most truly useful settlement in all Cormyr.” The traveler who knows that the few folk of Cormyr who’ve heard of the place regard it as a fortress full of crazies had best keep quiet about this. Visitors who wear out their welcome have been thrust out onto the mountainside with just what they’re wearing and have had the keep shut against them!

Visitors aren’t overly welcome in Hornshield anyway, though anyone with ideas to offer or unusual tools or items to sell is treated with courteous interest. All intruders are kept under escort and not encouraged to stay very long. The Hornshield elders greatly fear that an avaricious wizard—perhaps a Zhentarim—will show up one day to enslave them all. To deal with this anticipated threat, they keep a war wizard on

hand equipped with a *crystal ball* for quick communication with the Palace of the Purple Dragon in Suzail and a plentiful supply of *arrows of wizard slaying* for their archers.

A now-dead mage of Hornshield, Aumrathar Uernhands, was one of the few wizards of Faerûn to ever master the secrets of making *arrows of beholder slating*, and the community has over 40 of these precious shafts left, carefully hidden away. (It should be noted that preservative enchantments laid on the stones of the keep long ago make detection and directional magic almost useless inside the place.) Word of the wizard’s deeds spread around the Dragonreach a generation ago, and the community has grown used to visits from adventurers eager to buy these arrows. Hornshields are mindful that some of these shafts may one day be needed for



their own defense and that, with Aum-rathar dead, there'll be no more. Accordingly, they'll sell only two at most to any group per visit—and the price won't fall below 7,500 gp for the first arrow and 9,000 gp for the second. They have no pressing need for the money, but a few arrows well sold can cover the monetary needs of Hornshield for three seasons or more, so they'll bargain with patient inflexibility.

Hornshield itself is an echoing cacophony of pounding hammers, hissing and bubbling furnaces and vats, and scurrying workers. The smokes of their labors often stream up out of the cleft so thickly as to give it almost the appearance of a volcano from afar. Indeed, some caravan workers and shepherds call Shalandragar the Smoking Mountain. There aren't any shops

in Horn Shield per se. The visitor interested in purchasing something simply goes to the maker and dickers. Delivery to any Suzailan address can be provided.

Places of Interest in Hornshield

Restaurant/Tavern

The Weary Worker



Patrons who avoid the aforementioned mushroom mash ale served in the Weary Worker will otherwise find the fare here simple but beautifully prepared. The damp chill that pervades much of Hornshield is offset in this establishment by a variety of thick, hot soups, stews, and sauces.



Wyvernhunt

This former brigand's stronghold was one of the bases used by the usurper Gondegal, but these days the Purple Dragons don't bother to garrison the crumbling ramparts. Often used as a shelter by travelers, Wyvernhunt Keep is little more than a single large room built onto a rocky slope with its roof and the walls on the downward sides forming a high-walled platform from which defenders can look or fire weapons out over the ground below.

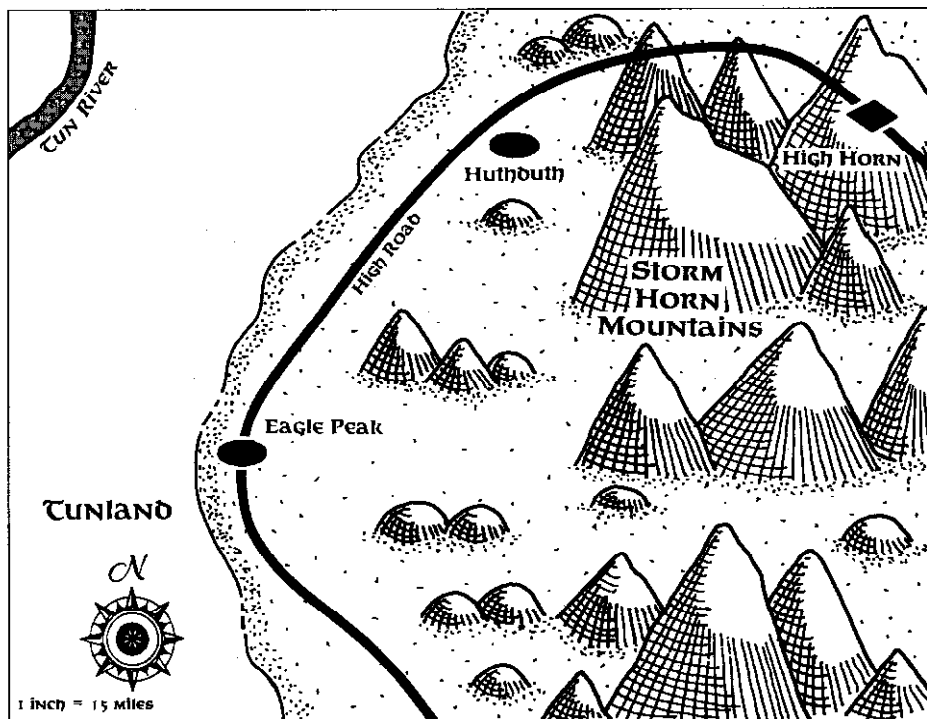
The hamlet of Wyvernhunt consists of about 16 families of shepherds who dwell in tiny stone cottages tucked here and there on the boulder-strewn high meadow slopes. Some of these "cottages" are just walled-over caves. The shepherds wander with their flocks until merchants show up in Deepwell Market (named for its well, which gives clear, fresh-tasting water) and ring the Buyers' Bell, signifying that they want to buy. Then the villagers engage in a footrace down from their various abodes. At the market, they vie with each other to sell their animals, raw wool they've shorn, or even a little goat's milk cheese. (Many of them keep a few goats for making cheese.)

Wyvernhunt is notable to the traveler only because of its well, the shelter the grandly overnamed keep affords, and for Spear Rock, a rough but famous shrine to Tempus. It is said by the faithful that the war god listens diligently to prayers offered at the gigantic Shield Stone, a boulder that resembles an altar table and lies in the shadow of Spear Rock itself. It is attested truth that several devotees of



Tempus who prayed at Spear Rock before battles were aided in the fray by lightning bolts smiting their foes—bolts that fell from blue, cloudless skies.

Lone warriors show up at the shrine all year round, and priests of Tempus regularly come to cleanse the place and remove offerings left there. Spear Rock can be clearly seen from the hamlet. It stands on a knoll several fields above the well, and a strong archer at Spear Rock could send arrows down into the market. Local legend insists that archers faithful to Tempus can't miss with bolts or arrows fired from the shrine, so it's an ideal place for a beleaguered archer to make such a stand. Such defenses have occurred at least twice in the past, notably when the outlaw Saeragus the Sly felled an entire patrol of Purple Dragons



with his archery after they'd cornered him at Spear Rock.⁹

There are a number of copper mines in the mountains high above Wyvern-hunt. The monster aeries that gave the place its name are thankfully rare now, making the mines much safer to work. Local legends speak of a brigand, Black Shaernauba, who is apparently a werewyvern: If she tries to rob someone on the road and the confrontation goes against her, she takes wyvern shape and flies away! She's reputed to dwell in a cave crammed with coins and gems and

to keep handsome male victims there as captives.

Black Shaernauba is said to have slain Purple Dragons who tried to establish a waypost in Wyvern-hunt and folk who tried to build inns there so often that both projects were abandoned. This seems to be more wishful thinking than truth. If the Crown of Cormyr wanted a guardpost in Wyvern-hunt, it'd take a lot more than one werewyvern to prevail against the war wizards who could be called upon to make the post a reality.

⁹Elminster says this claim is only somewhat exaggerated. From his comments, it seems that all missile weapons launched from within 40 feet of the Shield Stone receive a +5 bonus to their attack rolls.

He also noted another manifestation of the power of Tempus that has been reliably reported on several recent occasions: The voice of the war god speaks from the Shield Stone to tell a devout supplicant who prays to Tempus in a manner pleasing to the deity the location of a named foe. On most occasions, Tempus gives a one-word reply: "Suzail" or "Sembia," but the god has been known to be as specific as "north of the Hill of Lost Souls."



Appendix I: Folk of Cormyr



he folk listed herein are by no means the only important people in Cormyr. Indeed, Volo avoided the noble houses and the folk of the Royal Court as much as he could and, as is his wont, concentrated on individuals of interest to the traveler, rogue, and adventurer. Only a few of those people gave him the time of day, so what appears here can be considered a very incomplete roster of names that matter in Cormyr today.

With Elminster's aid, probable levels and other game statistics of these beings have been estimated, and additional personal details added. As this information is fresh, statistics published here take precedence over earlier published information. People are listed alphabetically by their first names because many folk in Cormyr lack surnames. Nicknames and titles are ignored when considering how to alphabetize a name.

AMBRATHA SUREN (CG hf F6; STR 19). Ambratha is a gruff, no-nonsense, pipe-smoking farmer of Aunkspear who's considered the best breeder of gray geese in all Suzail. She hasn't much time for insolent or foolish folk. She has been known to pick up raiding orcs and annoying humans alike and hurl them either into her duck pond or against the nearest of the standing stones she uses as fence supports, depending on whether she wants them ever to be able to bother her again.

ARGUL MARAMMAS (LN hm M13). Argül is a resident of Suzail engaged in research on the planes of existence and in spells of personal protection and concealment. To fund these very expensive pursuits and his love of exotic seafood dishes, rich sauces and fine wine, he makes scrolls containing from one to

three wizard spells to order. He charges an average of 5,000 gp per spell.

Argül is always eager to interview beings who've recently returned from other planes. He's a soft-spoken, condescending man who views most folk—warriors in particular—as destructive fools, cattle who must be endured by those who are more intelligent, such as himself. He is disgusted by mages such as the Red Wizards of Thay, who waste their energies trying to slay and dominate.

ASHEYRON THE LEARNED (LN hm F1; Sage fields: monsters). The owner of the Elfskull Inn in Arabel, Asheyron the Learned is Faerûn's foremost expert on gorgons as well as being a sage learned about many monsters. For example, he can lecture on what faiths various monster races follow and what rituals such worship entails. Asheyron is the owner of an *amulet of protection from petrification*, but he is believed by many to be immune to gorgon breath effects because he's survived many exposures unscathed—some of them, observers insist, on occasions when he'd forgotten to wear his *amulet*.

Asheyron briefly adopted the name of his older brother, "Asgetrion," in a vain attempt to inherit a goodly sum under the terms of an uncle's will. However, the gems his Uncle Orund had set aside couldn't be found after his death, so Asheyron has reverted to his own name.

Over recent years, Asheyron's views have drifted increasingly toward viewing the enforcement of rigid law and order as providing the best conditions for civilized living. This has resulted in his drafting many regulations, which he's offered to Myrmeen Lhal for adoption into law. Though she's accepted few of them, the two respect each other and often meet to discuss difficult cases of justice, a practice that the aging sage finds very flattering.

Asheyron's alignment has altered along with his views (from neutral good to lawful neutral), but he still refuses to allow anyone but agents of the Crown to use any of his large collection of scrolls of *protection from petrification*. He has no interest, he often says, in seeing every gorgon in Faerûn slain, rendering him an expert on nothing!

BAERELUS THE BOLD (N satyr m; Sage fields: flora and fauna of the King's Forest). Baerelus is Knightswood's expert on the lore and fauna of the King's Forest. He serves as a sympathetic ear and a source of wise advice to many young Cormyreans and is beloved by many people. In turn, he enjoys



this work and never dreams of accepting any recompense for it. From the confessions of the young he learns a great deal of the mood of the realm and of what's going on. King Azoun has learned to stop by with a sumptuous meal to learn the former from the satyr. Baerelus won't reveal confidences but can give the king a shrewd picture of the way folk are thinking and feeling in Cormyr. Azoun is wise enough to heed what Baerelus tells him.

BARANDOS HAWKLIN (LN hm F7). As the head of the Hawklin noble family, Barandos is a popular man in Suzail. Under his direction, the Hawklin clan has prospered from shrewd investments in Suzailan trade, from adventuring, and from sponsoring the adventures of others in the east reaches of Cormyr. Barandos himself has keen wits and debonair good looks, an easy way with charming ladies of both high and low rank, and unflinching standards of personal honesty and fair dealing. As this integrity has become known, his influence and importance has grown, as has the wealth of his family, due to investors flocking to work with him.

Coins seem to multiply in his grasp, yet he's never forgotten that adventuring made his fortune in the first place, and he remains the foremost patron of adventurers. His success has even spurred other noble families to quietly take chartered adventuring bands into their own employ. "The Hawk of Hawklin" is perhaps the most important man in Suzail who has no post at Court, does not head a senior noble house, and has no royal title.

BASKOR TRANTH (NG hm M9). Baskor is a hard-drinking, surly mage who dwells in Suzail, haunted by horrific memories of escaping Myth Drannor alone. All of his companions in the adventuring band from Priapurl known as the Brightstar were slaughtered.

Baskor is fascinated by tales of adventure, but he is petrified at the thought of ever adventuring again himself. He does aid novice adventurers with training and in-town spellcasting if they pay him up front.

His fear drives him to try anything to get his hands on new combat spells. The war wizards know this and are watching him. They've heard he's gotten visiting mages drunk on several occasions and kept them that way for prolonged periods while he copies all he can from their spellbooks. He doesn't attempt such tactics against formidable foes, opting instead to trade for spells. From similar swaps he has built up an extensive collection of spell scrolls.

BLENTA WHAELBUCKLER (CG hf F9; Sra 18/04). This well-loved restaurant-owner of Marsember is a Harper agent. Though most Marsembians don't know of her allegiance to Those Who Harp, they have heard that she's a scourge of evil who enjoys pouncing on pirates, slavers, and thieves by night.

A fearless giant of a woman, Blentra is expert at throwing things and has been known to fell pirates using hurled stools from clear across a wide channel of water in the dark. She swims powerfully, though she grunts, spits water, and pants as if she's dying. She once lifted a smashed cart and the dead horse draped over it to drag with one hand a pinned fellow citizen out from under it.

Blentra loves to be a part of adventures and frolics. She hates to be left in the dark and not told of everything interesting that's going on in Marsember.

DELTHRIN THE DEADMASTER (NE hm M12). This reclusive necromancer of Marsember's time is devoted to endless experiments with the drowned dead. He's reportedly devised a large, predatory sharklike aquatic undead creature that is made of the cobbled-together body parts of many beings and sports multiple jawed heads, grasping claws, and massive main jaws.

Delthrin gained notoriety when he defended Marsember against a pirate raid by raising a legion of sea zombies, ju-ju zombies, bone sharks, skeletons, and lacedons who swarmed aboard no less than six pirate vessels and tore the ships apart along with their crews!

DRAGUTH ENDROUN (N hm D12 of Silvanus). Draguth is the leader of the Knightswood Nine druidic circle. A white-haired, elderly man who likes to seem mysterious and act behind the scenes as much as possible, Draguth is reclusive, short-tempered, stubborn, and opinionated. At any time, he's apt to be fighting with at least half of the druids in the circle. He retains leadership of the circle for two reasons. First, even the other druids think he's more powerful than he really is, thanks to his manner. Most importantly, he has a brilliant understanding of how things grow and what should be planted to flourish and balance in any given area of the King's Forest. The lush vicinity of Knightswood is a testimony to his skills.

Draguth defends himself with a *staff of the woodlands* and a unique immunity to dryad charms. This immunity has allowed him to befriend the tree folk and perfect a *dimension door* ability that can take him from one particular tree to another many times in a day.

Draguth won't willingly leave the King's Forest, but he is apt to show up unheralded to confront anyone cutting wood, lighting a fire, or simply journeying through the forest depths to see what they're up to. Through the years, he has rescued several exhausted, wounded adventuring bands from woodland predators.

DUNMAN KIRIAG (NG hm F5; STR 17). Dunman runs the Lonesome Tankard Inn in Eveningstar. Due to long practice, Dunman is +3 to his attack roll inside the inn with any dagger. He carries a dagger +4



sheathed in one sleeve. Dunman has two secret sides: He's both a Crown agent and a Harper.

A psionic wild talent, Dunman has the abilities of *danger sense* and *mind bar* and also possesses a near-perfect memory. He remembers faces half-glimpsed two decades before or now disguised. A man of great, gruff discretion, he uses few words but is always kind and helpful. Many exhausted guests have been astonished to find him removing their boots and washing their feet with hot salts when they've slumped into a chair with a tankard after a long day of walking.

Once a Sembian noble's bodyguard and later a Purple Dragon officer, Dunman is far older than he appears. He gained eight *potions of longevity* while looting a dragon's hoard about 160 winters ago, and he has used four of them. He was then a member of the Six Splendid Swords adventuring band, and he came to love one of his companions, the gold elf warrior-mage Deularla "Hightower" Ithruen of Evermeet.

At first haughty, she slowly came to love him, and she joined with him in marriage shortly before another dragon devoured most of the company and reduced her to a scorched ruin. She spent her last strength in a mighty magic that sent her essence into Dunman. She now lives on inside him, a merry companion who warns him of danger, recalls things for him, and dispenses wry advice. With her presence, Dunman has no need of any other intimacy and has never remarried.

On occasion, Deularla speaks to others through Dunman's lips. She can speak and be aware while he sleeps or is unconscious. She retains some minor magical powers. She can send a silent, shadowy image of herself some 400 yards distant (which she's used to warn Tessaril of orc and brigand attacks), observe as if by a *wizard eye* for the same range, and *cure disease* and *neutralize poison* in Dunman—and in others using his touch.

ELESTRA BLAEBUR (CG hf B6). A popular party singer and dancer in Marsember, Elestra is also a Harper agent. When not performing at the Masked Merfolk nightclub, Elestra secretly carries messages for war wizards and the Harpers. (Every third minstrel or so who comes to play at the Masked Merfolk is a Harper agent or contact, so she can easily get and receive small items and information.) She also carries other messages on the side for well-paying patrons of the Merfolk—in particular, outlaws or feuding pirates who must remain hidden for their own safety—and makes a very good living at it. Her specialty is delivering beside messages at midnight to unsuspecting, well-guarded recipients.

ENDARTHAR of Wildwoods (CN hm M18). Edarthar is a fiery-tempered but brilliant mage who often served the crown of Tethyr with his spells, striking down pirate raiders and rebellious nobles. He fled from that country when civil war erupted and has



Dunman Kiriag

since settled in Wildwoods, a woodland mansion near Waymoot. He defeated its former owner, the wizard Orthaerus Manycloaks, in a sorcerous duel to gain possession of the estate.

While in Wildwoods, he has devoted his energies to developing new spells, creating and training a menagerie of servitor creatures (including griffons, umber hulks, and several intelligent oozes and jellies), and trying to destroy the ghost of Orthaerus. It seems that Orthaerus can still cast spells and lurks about the mansion, trying to ambush Endarthar for a rematch! Endarthar values his privacy, especially since every guest who proves hostile is suddenly defended by the resident ghost.

FILANI of Tantras (N hf M9; Sage fields: politics and history of the Dragonreach and Moonsea North). Now a resident of Tilverton, Filani is dignified and graceful despite being as tall and as heavily built as many warriors of renown. Dressed in tentlike but magnificently embroidered gowns, she shuffles about the marketplaces and inns of the town, buying meals and drinks for caravan folk who tell her news. Many of her sources are regular reporters who know they can get their sustenance for free on a night stopover. In this way, Filani keeps abreast of happenings in the area.



As she has a talent for judging character and also for keeping track of many details, she often correctly anticipates events that will unfold in her corner of the world. She's not interested in combat or adventure, but merely in calmly selling her expertise for reasonable fees and thereby passing her days in comfort.

FILFAERIL STORMBILLOW (CG hf M16). Filfaeril is a former adventuress who retired to Marsember, the city of her birth, some 30 years ago. She now makes her living creating and selling magical items and potions to younger adventurers. From these adventurers she also buys rare and special materials she needs to create still more items of magic.

Still beautiful despite her 60-odd winters, Filfaeril is protected by a rare spell that can enclose her in a healing sphere that lashes out at foes with wandlike attacks. On two recent occasions she's defeated attackers in this way. The first set of these attackers was a pirate band bent on capturing her to serve them with her magic; the other was a Zhen-tarim-led group bent on assassination and grabbing what magic she might have at hand. The attacks have made Filfaeril somewhat cautious, but she has decided against letting them cause her to change her lifestyle.

GAHLAERD MOSSMERE (NG hm M12). This sarcastic, smooth-tongued mage dwells in Tilverton and has a knack for devising highly effective new spells. He sells one or two such magics a year to traveling mages who've come to know the worth of his work. They pay an base price of 10,000 gp per spell level for his creations. Such fees allow him to live very comfortably, protect himself with much personal magic, and continue his researches. Persistent rumors link him with the Rogues of Tilverton, a local band of thieves and outlaws. But then, as he's said, "Rumor runs before us all like a yapping dog that dares not bite. It makes noise enough to annoy but need not be regarded further."

IYRYTHARNA DANTRAS (CG hf M16). Iyrytharna dwells in the countryside near Juniril. She keeps to her underground home and crafts spells most of the time. Her husband Thorn is a maker of fine knives and a werepegasus. From time to time on summer nights, they can be seen over the Wyvernwater from afar, a woman whose unbound hair streams behind her as she rides a swift-winged black Pegasus bareback, both of them rolling and diving in the air in delighted abandon.

JESTRA (NG hf Tra18). Jestra dwells in Arabel and makes a very good living by using small magics to improve the appearance, usefulness, and value of objects brought to her by clients. She owns and rents out many houses in the city. She uses one of them, which is linked to her own residence by a

golem-guarded tunnel, to meet discreetly with noble clients who desire anonymity.

Formerly a plain woman, she's become a striking beauty through the use of her magic, though she retains her large, hooked nose because she's fond of it. She is pioneering the use of safe, subtle, long-lasting magic to heighten the beauty of other women. They typically pay her 2,000 to 12,000 gp for treatment. She never identifies her clients and is rarely seen in public except during her morning food shopping which she performs alone. She is identifiable from afar by her long, curly ringlets of glossy blue-black hair.

LASPEERA NAERINETH (NG hf M14). Laspeera runs a school in deportment, courtly speech, and letters for young ladies in Suzail. Graceful, fearless, and widely respected, she is a prominent war wizard and is regarded by Suzailans as the best source of advice for anyone with a moral dilemma. Some grown nobles journey to Suzail to discuss things privately with her just as they once did as young pupils at her exclusive and extremely expensive school. (Rates at the school are 1,000 gp per month.)

The House of Grace turns out young women with superior learning manners, and practice in observation, reasoning, and using their judgment. Its graduates' reputations are so stellar that rich merchants in Sembia who value strong mates come first to Suzail to woo.

Almost single-handedly Laspeera has produced a generation of wise, capable noblewomen who are the envy of other lands. She's also been known to tutor pupils in magic from time to time—always in return for a service to be demanded later. This service is almost always timely aid to be delivered when Azoun or the realm of Cormyr is in need. By these means, she's dragged many adventuring bands into defending Cormyr's interests in crises.

MAERUN STOUTBOLD (CN hm F5). Maerun is a somewhat disreputable merchant of Suzail who deals in nets, ropes, masts, sails, and ships. He buys, sells, rents, and repairs all of these. He usually winters in Marsember, where his coins are very active in shipbuilding.

Maerun's attraction is his discretion. No matter who's asking, Maerun never talks. The stout, almost moon-faced man has a high natural immunity to mind-probings, both magical and psionic, and has never been convicted of anything illegal. It's open knowledge in Suzail's wharves that Maerun's your man if you want covert shipboard passage out of Suzail or need a ship refitted immediately in the dead of night.

Maerun is a cheerfully amoral man—as long as he gets paid, he's happy. He's been happy often enough that when he was caught by a senior war wizard personally carrying two bound and gagged lasses (undoubtedly kidnapped upland Cormyreans



destined for slavery in Westgate or points south) aboard one of his boats he was able to hire a Sembian mage to swear that the girls were two pet displacer beasts that the mage had *polymorphed* into human form to avoid alarming honest citizens. Maerun was simply shipping them to a client of his. The Suzailan justiciar's comments on the words quoted here were caustic in the extreme, and the court was open in its disbelief—but Maerun walked free. Again.

MAXER HLARR, Defender of Suzail (NG hm Inv11). This reclusive invoker has simple tastes: He likes peace and quiet, with a stable realm around him so he can devote his full attention to building ever-larger and more elaborate constructs. The constructs are items animated by combinations of spells. They acquire a limited sentence of their own.

His work and the magical item retrieval work of his constructs have made him far more powerful than his level would indicate. His constructs have successfully recovered magical items from many lich holds and tombs, as well as monster-haunted Myth Drannor and the drowned ruins of a lost, ancient city of sorcerers off Athkatla. Because of the items his constructs have retrieved, he's a walking arsenal of puissant magical weaponry at all times.

King Azoun awarded him the title "Defender," which gives him ranking equal to that of a baron in both the nobility and among Purple Dragons, after an attack on Suzail by four dragons. Maxer unleashed powerful magic to rescue Suzail and several of the prominent mages of the city who were losing their battle against the destructive wyrms.

Maxer remains a quiet, private sort of man. He avoids all requests to teach by would-be apprentices and shies away even more energetically from the overtures of sorceresses who express any interest in getting to know him better.

MELLOMIR of Arabel (LN hm M27; Sage fields history, prophecies, and divination). Mellomir is a man respected across the known Realms. A dry, dapper man whose neatly trimmed hair and beard are going white, Mellomir has accurately predicted several important events, including the fall of Bhaal and Myrkul in the Time of Troubles and the reappearance of the fabled *Ring of Winter*. He's survived several kidnappings and single-handedly destroyed an entire Westgate family after it deemed him a foe and tried repeatedly to assassinate him. He's protected by an enchantment of his own devising that gives his body permanent, continuous, automatic spell warding equal in effects to a *ring of spell turning*.

MYSHANTA HALARRA (CG hf Abj14). Myschanta dwells in Arabel and is much in demand as a sorceress-for-hire. Fat, short, and energetic, she chuckles and snorts her way cheerfully through life, clad



Myschanta Halarra

in a succession of old breeches, vests, swash-topped boots and rumpled hide shirts that make her look like a stablemaster or hostler rather than a mage. She is one of the rare workers-of-magic who'll ride out to the rescue of beleaguered adventurers, though her fees are high. She charges 6,000 gp for a simple service like guiding folk to a spot, bringing healing potions to a locale, or affecting an escape from a prison cell, and this base price doubles for any spell combat situations.

She's a capable spellcaster with a shrewd grasp of tactics and experience in dealing with many monsters, and she's seldom caught by surprise. She always seems to have an item or timely spell up her sleeve. If she's sorely injured or slain, a *contingency* spell whisks her body to High Lady Alustriel of Silvermoon, who "owes her a favor or six." This has happened twice to the astonishment of the court in Silvermoon, but that's only twice in 30-odd years of her being called into desperate situations.

ORBRIL of Skull Crag (CN hm M15). A haughty, blond-bearded and increasingly stout wizard who loves good food and lots of it, Orbril doesn't dwell in Skull Crag at all but in a peaktop tower nearby that is high above the Crag. From this windswept aerie he runs a magical delivery service. For stiff fees



Szwentil Illeon

(10,000 gp and up) he delivers prepared packages to precise locations at prearranged times. For instance, he may agree to send a strongestest containing food, *potions of healing*, weapons, wine, and spell scrolls to a certain cavern in Undermountain either at moonrise on Uktar 11th or when a magical alarm is set off by the entry of a particular being into that cavern. For dangerous or hostile deliveries, such as sending a lit torch into a warehouse where barrels of oil are stored or putting a stone block into the air directly above someone's throne or bed, Orbril demands three to four times his base fee, and he doubles that total if his target is a wizard or magical retaliation is likely.

Orbril's many transportation spells are secret magics of his own devising, but two properties of the spells he uses most often are known: He can deliver a second item to the same spot almost instantly (for example, if his first strike against a target fails), and he can follow any sending to its destination without error, work magic or perform physical acts there, and then return to his aerie by force of will alone, snapped back to his departure point.

These capabilities and Orbril's use of them have made him unpopular with a growing number of mages, rulers, and leaders of violent organiza-

tions (such as thieving guilds), and they've mounted several attacks on his home. Recently the Zhentarim sent in six specially equipped ju-ju zombies, who tried to occupy Orbril with magical attacks while a beholder *teleported* in to launch the main attack on him. Orbril escaped by triggering several *blade barrier* like defensive fields and *teleporting* to a storage cavern of his own. From there he sent four death tyrants (undead beholders) to deal with his attackers. Then he used unknown means to trace the Zhentarim, who were observing all this via *crystal ball*, and sent a *delayed blast fireball* to them.

PERAPHON THOND (CN hm F3). Peraphon is a slim, short, elegant man with a goatee, perfumed black hair, dark clothing, and a plenitude of gleaming and glittering finger rings. He's a supercilious, sneering man who's known to be very shrewd (which is not to say double-dealing) in investments and business negotiations—hence his long row of warehouses just inside the western face of Arabel's city wall. He always has something up his sleeves to deal with treachery.

He often hires adventurers to go prospecting in the Stonelands or to work certain mines there that he can provide maps or directions to. Unfortunately for the adventurers, these mines are imperiled by lurking monsters, and Peraphon often neglects to mention this unless pointedly asked.

Peraphon is extremely wealthy and is known to have purchased some powerful magics to protect himself against personal attack. One of his rings is a *ring of spell turning* and another is thought to hold six or more gargoyles that he can summon forth and bend to his will.

RULDAN NYSGART (NG hm M16). This mage dwells in a simple cottage in the back woods near Espar, and he there trains more would-be wizards than any other mage of Cormyr. From near and far they come to him to be taught a single spell each and sent forth to gain practice in its use. In this way Ruldán keeps himself supplied with a dozen or so apprentices at once and makes quite a good living. His cottage rarely has fewer than six wizards of low to middling levels in it.

His students are under strict orders not to bother the good folk of Espar or the vicinity in any way, so as not to make themselves or Ruldán himself unwelcome. Ruldán is a kindly, patient, nondescript man whose brown beard conceals several powerful *tokens* of his own crafting that have powers akin to better-known magical rings. In this way, he commands powers equal to four or five such items at once.

SASZESK (NE hm F3). Saszesk is a shadowy, semi-legendary man in Suzail. He's the skulker in shadows blamed for all manner of disappearances.



In reality, the shy, soft-spoken Saszesk was long ago co-opted by the war wizards to serve the Crown. He remains an effective smuggler of goods and folk into and out of Suzail—but pays tithes to the Court and keeps Vangerdahast scrupulously informed as to everything he handles. His work provides a handy relief valve for things best handled covertly and lets Azoun know just who among his citizens is most disloyal.

Saszesk lives in a complex of cellars under the Six Candles inn, a property he owns in the northwestern reach of Suzail, guarded by traps and by his use of a *hat of disguise*. He's comfortably wealthy, but his coins are hidden somewhere else—reputedly in a cellar somewhere under the Royal Court.

SZWENTIL ILLEON (NE hm F5). This slim, saturnine, young-looking man always dresses neatly in black and surrounds himself with bodyguards, including several hired battle mages. One of the founders of the Six Coffers Market Priakos, Szwentil is rumored to have a personal fortune of over six million gold pieces and over a dozen houses in as many lands.

Rumors persist in his home city of Marsember that he is involved in large-scale smuggling, but some citizens take the view that he need not make coins in such risky ways. He's wealthy enough to buy up stocks of any valuable goods in order to create shortages whenever he desires and then release his holdings at top prices to swell his wealth manyfold. That he does not is a measure of the limits of his greed and of his desire to remain as anonymous as possible.

Szwentil is calculating, farsighted, and totally amoral. He currently devotes most of his time to two projects: openly overseeing the building of many ships and buildings in Sembia and covertly purchasing as much Cormyrean and Sembian land as possible. With land and ships, he thinks to build himself into a power as great as any ruler—with none of the burdens of scrutiny and accountability a ruler must bear.

THEAVOS THONTAR (LN hm W17). Theavos is a lusty, rollicking, good-natured man who enjoys jests, pranks, partying, and teasing the authorities and stuffer folk in his home city of Arabel. As a result, many of these people detest him, and others find he wears on the nerves a bit much.

The life of many a party, Theavos enjoys juggling will-o'-wisps, small children, and full wine goblets overhead while he dances with the youngest and prettiest maidens who dare to approach him. He has romanced more than one visiting lady with a whirlwind of gifts, compliments, and kindly deeds.

All of this gaiety conceals well his role as an information-gatherer (spy) for Vangerdahast, and



Tongreth

that status in turn masks his deeper loyalty to the Harpers, to whom he feeds state secrets of Cormyr along with everything else he learns. Azoun and several of his relatives grew up enjoying the antics of Theavos, who treated them as equals to be entertained whenever they came within reach. They are so fond of him that, were his spying to be revealed tomorrow, it's likely he'd escape any punishment entirely.

THENTLAS (CN hm F3). Primarily known as a large-scale landlord in both Suzail and Yhaunn, Thentias is a calm, unassuming man who likes to work behind the scenes, dispassionately devising precisely how to reap the most gold out of life. He rents, buys, and sells properties through agents. In Suzail, he works through Ramkzorn Sharlin or Alasgar Thurym. He also has an undercover bodyguard force that he uses to protect himself from rivals who resort to violence and to strike back at foes. His notable holdings in Suzail include the Wailing Wheel inn and the entire east side of Mistmoat Alley.

TONGRETH of Marsember (LN hm Con21). Tongreth is a recent arrival in the city (from just where, he declines to say). A subtle, controlled



man known for his extensive wine cellar and love of cuddly kittens, old books, and jellied eels, Tongreth is a master conjurer who deals ably with many creatures of other planes. He is served in Marsember by both gargoyles and griffons. He enjoys working behind the scenes in the ever-shifting intrigues of Marsember, ensuring that interests from Sembia and Westgate never manage to dominate the city. Recent rumors suggest he comes from, and may still serve, Thay.

TSHARLURA of Blackthorne (LG hf M14). A kindly, respectable woman, Tsharliura dwells in her own fortified mansion not far west of Eveningstar. Blackthorne is guarded by a resident family of wyverns that adventurers and Purple Dragons alike venturing into the area are warned not to molest.

Tsharliura has impeccable manners and dignity. Azoun often brings visiting nobility to visit her to impress them with the strong cultured ladies of the realm after they first encounter Laspeera in Suzail. Tsharliura is tolerant of lawless behavior in others, but always acts to promote peace, harmony, and safety in Cormyr. Severely beaten in her youth by drunken relatives, she's been known to fly into a fury when she encounters drunks and to use her spells to administer some rather frightening sober-up cures involving wild flying, plunges into icy pools, and the like.

Tsharliura is working on several projects of practical magic. One is a chest that drinks energy in a remote spot and emits it as heat and light. When she perfects methods of controlling the heat and light, such chests could be used to light and warm cottages in winter by drawing heat from compost, hot springs, manure piles, and large, communal peat-banked fires. Unfortunately for chilly Cormyreans, Tsharliura is a slow, careful, methodical worker, more interested in properly documenting everything for later mages than in achieving swift results.

UNGATHROS of Mistrim (NG hm M15). Ungathros is a wizard noted for his skill at magically repairing wagons, ships, and roofs. He is a mild-mannered, unassuming man who looks more like a messenger than a mage, but when angered his temper is legendary. He's usually embroiled in a dozen or so feuds with merchants who've tried to cheat him. Mistrim, his country mansion near Marsember, is guarded by many monsters because of past attacks by his foes. These creatures claim victims every year because of (false) rumors that persist in Westgate and Sembia about the great riches Ungathros has stored there.

VALANTHA SHIMMERSTAR (CG hf M13). A fun-loving war wizard, Valantha can readily move a raucous crowd to tears with her singing, as she does at many

parties in Suzail, and just as readily scandalize and entertain with outrageous pranks. She has slipped a live lizard down Queen Filfaeril's bodice, and she has often used her magic to perfectly mimic the most stuffy old noble at a feast. Pretending to be the noble, she utters flirtatious remarks and sly innuendoes, twisting every favorite phrase of the man she's lampooning.

Her acting abilities coupled with magical disguises have aided her in standing in for various royals and nobility in dangerous situations. Vangerdahast regards her as one of his most able and valuable assistants, and he tolerates her outrageous pranks because of it. Suzailans still talk about the time she walked into an exceedingly long Council of Mages meeting in a diaphanous nightgown and asked Vangerdahast when he'd be coming to bed, because "the pastries are gone and all sixteen of us are getting bored!"

VINDALA CHALANTHER (NG hf Ill15). Vindala dwells in Marsember, tutoring lesser mages and occasionally hiring out her spellcasting abilities—to both desperate adventurers and crafty smugglers, locals say. Though she spends days at a time magically disguised, she is said to be an impish beauty with a petite build, glossy black eyes, and hair to match her eyes. She has a quick temper, a habit of getting even, and a prankish sense of humor. To their cost, many pirates have learned that she makes a bad enemy.

WENDEIRA ILLATHOS (CN hf C12 of Gond). Wendeira is a free-spirited worshiper of the god of artifice who stimulates many folk to buy, improve upon, and use unusual devices and items crafted by all of the intelligent races of Faerûn. She sells such odd wares from a shop in the hamlet of Monksblade called Wendeira's Wonders. Living and working alone there, she affects a fey appearance and strange airs to discourage thieves and anyone with thoughts of slave-snatching. She is in fact a clever and perceptive woman and completely sane.

She enjoys slipping out of her shop for hunting expeditions with the items she uses to defend herself if attacked in her shop: gunpowder wands. These gunpowder wands are the first handguns known outside Lantan. They are two-shot, silver-plated affairs that inflict 1d8+1 points of damage each per successful shot; they have a range of 70 feet. Consecrated to Gond, these weapons are deadly in Wendeira's hands, and she's never without them or her *ring of free action* and her *ring of spell turning* – so beware! She carries the gunpowder wands loaded her boots.

Wendeira is looking for a suitable mate. She will settle for just about anyone who happens to be a brilliant inventor.



Appendix II:

The Sword Heralds



One of the most fascinating—and little known—subjects in any study of the folklore of Cormyr is the Sword Heralds. Volo made such a hash of wild speculations about these rather mysterious folk that Elminster said grimly, “We fix that, or this book gets renamed forthwith: *Volo’s Guide to the Effects of an Imprisonment Spell on the Victim, Written from Personal Experience*.” So here, in game terms, is what Elminster would reveal about this topic. He offers it with only one bit of advice: “Remember, ye’re not the first gung-ho adventurers to learn about all this—and where are all those predecessors now?”

The Sword Heralds were mages of Cormyr long ago. They specialized in creating hideaways: extradimensional refuges that only the most wealthy folk—nobles, successful merchants, and powerful priests and wizards—could afford. Such refuges were of great importance when Cormyr was a wild land roamed by monsters and rivals and lashed by weather that one hadn’t time to construct sufficient shelter to withstand (because of warfare, failing crops, or the like). Eventually, these refuges ceased to be hiding places for folk fleeing the weather or the blades of enemies. They were then commonly used to store valuables and perishable treasures because within them there are no extremes of heat and cold, nor any precipitation, keeping weathering to a minimum.

Abandoned or forgotten refuges that have been rediscovered sometimes hold elaborate antique ladies’ gowns that are now much sought-after at court.

The Sword Heralds acquired the name by which history knows them today because entry to one of their refuges could only be accomplished by someone going to a particular secret spot with two items: something fairly common but kept a family secret, and an edged metal weapon that one of the Sword Heralds had touched during the enchantment. The common items ranged from a cup of water or mushroom soup to a human bone, a stag antler, or a leaf from a particular type of tree. The edged weapons were typically one of 3 to 12 swords and/or daggers owned by the family to whom the refuge was constructed. The common item was always consumed during the magical passage into the refuge, and in a few cases the weapons also couldn’t pass into the refuge and would fall to the floor at the spot at which the activating being entered the refuge. Exit from such refuges typically requires only entering a specific area—usually the end of a blind corridor—and not any sort of ritual or triggering items.

Entrants into a hideaway could bring a living being who was touching them along with them, as well as anything they or this second being wore or carried. Typically, noble houses and wealthy merchants took gems, coins, and legal documents into their refuges to begin with. Only in desperate circumstances did the



owners discover that these refuges were ideal hiding places for fugitives from justice and inconvenient corpses.

The Sword Heralds died or disappeared centuries ago, and many refuges are now lost or their precise whereabouts forgotten, though a few remain closely guarded family secrets. (The Hidden House used by Lord Tessaril Winter of Eveningstar¹ is one such.) By ancient law, a king of Cormyr and his agents (for example, the war wizards) cannot demand to see or enter such a refuge or even force someone to confirm the existence of a refuge. This hasn't stopped them from employing chartered adventurers and private citizens to find out such things for them. As a result, many refuges sport traps and/or guardians. The traps typically are deadly defenses of the main passage in the refuge, and are often consist of hinged falling stone blocks and hedgehogs.² Guardians range from animated skeletons to family liches.

The Sword Heralds are said to have left behind a list of all their refuges, disguised in a series of impenetrable verses (one example follows) that they hid all over Cormyr in the halls of the Palace of the Purple Dragon, the Royal Court, and in private homes alike. The Sword Herald also constructed great keys—small items that various sages violently disagree over the forms of, from orbs to rods to gauntlets—that open the way into all Sword Herald refuges when used in the proper place, even without the proper

blade or common item.

Some refuges have been found by adventurers. Most notable among these finds is that of the Dawninghunt refuge in 1346 DR, which proved to contain a chest of over a thousand large and splendid emeralds as well as four big, extensive spellbooks and several items of minor magic—and a wardrobe of fine gowns once worn 200 years earlier by the Lady Rhyndaera Dawninghunt. These garments became an instant fashion rage at court when reintroduced by nobles who'd bought them from the fortunate adventurers.

The Golden Griffon Eyes all-woman adventuring band from Selgaunt (charter by Azoun's hand in 1341 DR) made its fortune on the find and settled into retirement on luxurious wooded estates near Espar. They earned their hard-sought riches not only by defeating a formidable guardian monster of unknown species, but also by discerning the meaning of the following verse:

*Full moon on Wyvernwater touches thee,
Proud warrior conquering benches three.
Where the smaller steel points a way,
Stand where the lonely warrior may.*

This verse referred to a statue of Ring Dhalmass that still stands on the banks of the Wyvernwater hard by Hultail. The statue depicts the armed and armored king on a rearing horse whose hooves prance on three stone benches that form the base of the statue. The king is waving

¹As described in the novel *Crown of Fire*.

²A hedgehog in this sense, is a giant shield weighted with rocks or bricks on its upper side and festooned with a forest of downward-pointing swordblades on its lower side. It is triggered by a treadle or by stepping on a flagstone, which releases a catch. The whole affair the plummets down on a chain to impale intruders from above. A successful Intelligence ability check and a successful saving throw vs. paralysis are required to completely avoid this deadly trap once it is triggered. If only one roll succeeds, half damage is suffered; full damage is 5d6 points.



a sword over his head and is outlined in moonlight whenever a full moon shines down on the area.

The sculpted monarch also has a dagger at his waist. If one looks at where its sharp end is pointing, one sees a small rocky knoll about a mile away that is known as Knight's Stand because a lone warrior once held its height against an orc band. The knoll is also flooded with moonlight when the moon is full. If one stands on it with the right blade and item (in this case, a handful of grass) or one of the Sword Heralds' great keys, one can see an upright oval of light that is the *gate* into the Dawninghunt Vault.

A person using the *gate* enters a small room that holds only a chair, a table, a chamberpot, a stoppered carafe of water, a cot, a candle lantern, and lots of dust.

The names of Dawninghunt ancestors, along with the dates of their lives, are inscribed on large stones set flush in the walls as if these ancestors were interred behind the stones. If one puts the chair up on the table, however, part of the floor of this chamber vanishes to reveal stairs down into the vault proper: a large room lit by a *driftglobe*. Its unfailing light once fell upon a stack of chests crammed with coins, gems, and trade bars of silver and gold, now part of the Golden Griffon Eyes' wealth. The *driftglobe* gleams still on the tombs of six Dawninghunts, including the sage Harglast Dawninghunt, whose coffin is now enclosed by a *forcecage* (and *contingency* spells that set off certain *alarm* spells elsewhere, among other things). These precautions have been taken to keep adventurers from magically ques-



tioning him about his field of expertise: magical items of early Cormyr!

Another verse of the Sword Herald's has become well-known because it appears and disappears from time to time (seemingly at random) on the top of a tomb in a public crypt in Suzail:

*Glonder rides a long long way
Through forests wild and marshes fey,
And at the place of many nets,
Glonder walks, but first frets.*

To decipher this, one must know that almost 300 years ago the mage Glonder rode the length of Calantar's Way in a single night and day to meet and defeat a dragon. The only place on this route where one might find "many nets" is Immersea, where the mist-fishers employ many nets indeed. From time to time the phantom of Glonder is seen in Immersea, wringing his hands or rushing about with his hands raised in endless spellcasting. So one must find the spot where the phantom first appears on its sporadic nightly rounds, and there one must take the right blade and item to find the way to an unknown refuge.

These directions were worked out by the court jester Ubaldo over a century ago, but no one knows what the right common item is, or has the right blade, or has discerned precisely where the phantom first appears. However, where it appears must be the cellar of some structure in Immersea, because the phantom then rises up out of Calantar's Way and rushes to a certain alley. Standing with a great key in hand in the spot where Glonder rises through the street has proven ineffective.

At least eight great keys are known to exist, but it is thought that many more have been hidden or stolen. Much of the argument over what the keys look like centers on these missing keys, one of which is perennially rumored to be for sale or rent in Sembia. Local lore in Suzail insists that one of the scepters of the extensive Obarskyr regalia has a great key built into it. Suzailan lore also holds that another great key was long ago given into the keeping of an anonymous commoner of the city at a masked ball, so that the realm might have a chance of survival if evil magic possessed the mind of its king or evil forces swept over the land with conquering armies. The sage Tharondar of Arabel (now deceased, but writing well after the Sword Herald's disappearance) postulates that there may be lesser keys that open several refuges, but not all of them. Like so much about the work of the Sword Herald's, this may be pure speculation.

We do know that there were at least 17 Sword Herald's, that they weren't formal heralds of any sort (though they did offer nobility of the realm the service of limning a chosen badge-of-arms on stone walls and other permanent locations), that they were powerful wizards who devised many hitherto unknown and now-forgotten spells, that they indulged in planar travel and in feuds with the Red Wizards of Thay, and that the most powerful of them was a man called Yimluth. Yimluth was an archmage of at least 26th level and a werestag. He could take the form of a stag or a hairy-hided manlike form with a stag's head. Ultimately he was unable to leave one of these bestial forms, and he remains in hiding somewhere in the Ring's Forest if he hasn't



been slain. (It's generally agreed he had achieved near-immortality.) He also may be traveling from refuge to refuge by means of powerful magic that enables him to jump from one extradimensional place to another.

One group of bards and sages believe Yimluth now serves Mielikki or Silvanus in order to achieve demigodhood or that he is a demigod already. Another group swears that he is in some sort of stasis, awaiting a desperate call from the throne of Cormyr that will bring him to the defense of the realm in its time of greatest need. As Elminster commented dryly, it's clear only that his true fate is unknown.

Another Sword Herald whose name is remembered is Murald. He was a lover of gardens and tapestries. At least six paintings and tapestries on the walls of various inner chambers of the Palace of the Purple Dragon are his work. They are also *gates* to different locales in the Realms. One of these locations is a hunting lodge somewhere in the heart of the Ring's Forest, another depiction leads to the eastern slope of Maiden's Tomb Tor near Waterdeep, and a third is known to lead to a cavern refuge in the Storm Horns somewhere overlooking Espar that is kept stocked with weapons, food-stuffs, and helmed horror guardians.

The aims, identities, and ultimate fates of the Sword Heralds remain shrouded in mystery. All that is known is that they came to the realm suddenly, but without fuss, had no open strife with the Crown or nobles, and worked on many things that enriched the realm. On several occasions they sat in judgment on an individual or a policy, trying to awe the king or the nobles into seeing things as they did.



These assemblies so impressed the folk of the day that everyday Cormyrean speech today applies the term "full swords court" to any fancy, formal, or very important and solemn occasion.

Although the Sword Heralds seem to have vanished, some folk believe at least a few of them still survive. It's a popular superstition that they're still guiding or influencing the realm, unseen, today. Mothers and old wives sometimes chide misbehaving children with the saying: "Remember—the Heralds are watching!" Many members of the staff of the Palace of the Purple Dragon believe that some of the ghosts haunting the courts and gardens in Suzail are Sword Heralds or their servant creatures, but the truth about the Heralds has so far eluded Vangerdahast, and if Elminster knows, he's not telling.



Appendix III:

Magic in Cormyr



agic in Cormyr is a vigorous, ongoing thing. It is as driven today by pride, competition, the needs of war, and ambition as it was by

survival against dragons and other monstrous foes when the land was younger. It's a field far beyond the scope of any single work and certainly beyond the rather (as Elminster sourly puts it) "gosh-wow" treatment magic receives in any work by Volo. The Old Mage of Shadowdale demanded, however, that the worst of Volo's distortions and errors be replaced by this appendix, "Just so ye'll have the faintest of notions regarding what he's babbling about." So (sigh) here goes.

Gates in Cormyr

Permanent *teleport* portals, or *gates*, have long been present in Cormyr. The Sword Heralds (discussed in Appendix II) created many specialized gates, and royal and noble families down through the years have used many methods to acquire their own private magical transport. A servant of Mielikki or, if one believes the faithful, the goddess herself created the Blueleaf Gate. This little-known transport links a blueleaf tree in the Royal Gardens of Suzail with another blueleaf tree that stands beside the rising headwaters of a clear spring in the Ring's Forest, just south of Eveningstar.

A being who touches either tree and speaks a secret word of activation is

transported (*teleport without error*) to the other tree, along with all worn or carried goods and, if desired, another being. This extra person must be directly touched, but need not be conscious or even alive.

This route has long been used by war wizards, king's messengers, and other agents of the crown to quickly and untraceably travel the length of Cormyr's heartlands. Azoun has used it all his life to visit Tessaril Winter in Eveningstar. During Azoun's reign, Vangerdahast has always set war wizards armed with various tracing spells to watch over both trees to see who comes and goes. These sentinels never challenge users, and they usually remain unseen.

A similar route, linking nine standing stones, spans the western "wall" of the realm, leaping from high valley to rocky height to cliffside cavern along the Storm Horns that march down the western flank of Cormyr. This network is thought to have been created by a now-vanished school or community of wizards who dwelt in isolation in the mountains and who wanted a swift way in and out of their home that allowed them to avoid mountain-climbing.

If one believes local lore and war wizards' reports, other *gate* networks—origins unknown—exist in the Hullack Forest and the Stonelands. The Forest Kingdom of Cormyr—and in particular, its wilder fringes and surrounding back country—has long been favored territory for mages looking to settle down in



peaceful isolation and work on their magical arts.

Wizards in Cormyr

Down through the centuries, Cormyr's pastoral beauty has been embraced by hundreds of powerful wizards. Their cottages and small mage towers—or their ruins—stand amid the trees on many a side lane or wooded trail in the realm. Vangerdahast frowns severely on mages who kidnap or experiment on local beasts and beings, but other wizards are left alone so long as they don't work against the Crown. (In the past, many nobles hired penniless wizards to assist in attempts to overthrow the Obarskysrs.)

Some of the most notable current independent mages resident in Cormyr are listed hereafter. Details of these personages can be found in Appendix I. Elminster cautions that this list is very incomplete. It was compiled by Volo, and it concentrates on mages who don't bother to—or who can't—hide themselves away from general knowledge.

Arabel

Jestra (NG hf Tra18)
Mellomir of Arabel (LN hm M27; Sage fields: history, prophecies, and divination)
Myschanta Halarra (CG hf Abj14)
Theavos Thontar (LN hm M17)

Vicinity of Espar

Ruldan Nysgart (NG hm M16)

Vicinity of Eveningstar

Tsharliira of Blackthorne (LG hf M14)

Vicinity of Juniril

Ilyrtharna Dantras (CG hf M16)

Marsember

Delthrin the Deadmaster (NE hm Nec12)
Filfaeril Stormbillow (CG hf M16)
Tongreth of Marsember (LN hm M21)
Vindala Chalanther (NG hf III15)

Vicinity of Marsember

Ungathros of Mistrim (NG hm M15)

Vicinity of Skull Crag

Orbril of Skull Crag (CN hm M15)

Suzail

Argûl Marammas (LN hm M13)
Baskor Tranth (NG hm M9)
Laspeera Naerinth (NG hf M14)
Maxer Hlarr, Defender of Suzail (NG hm Inv11)
Valantha Shimmerstar (CG hf M13)

Tilverton

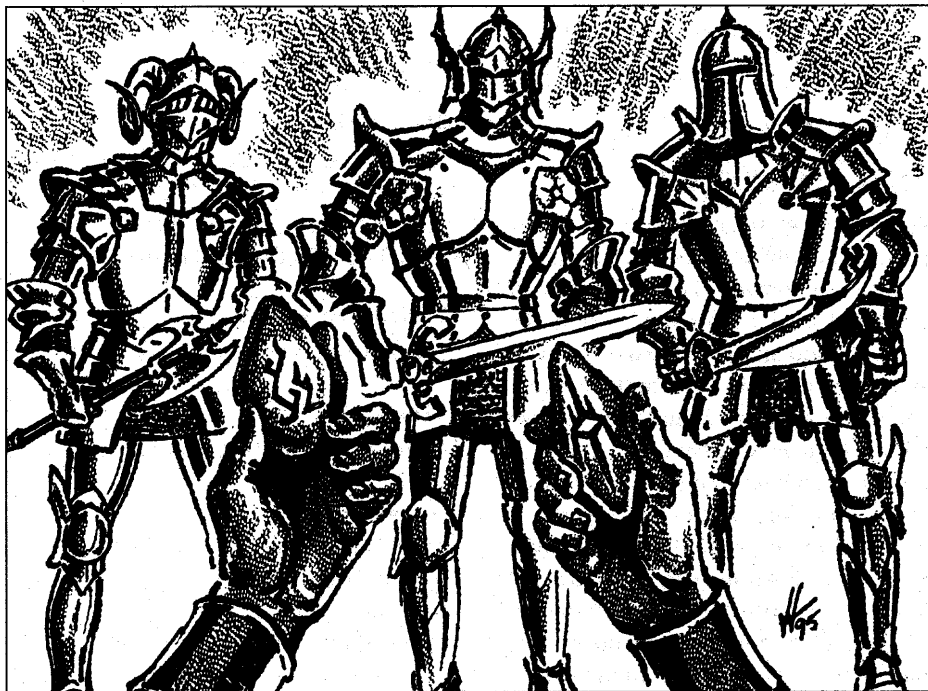
Filani of Tantras (N hf M9; Sage fields: politics & history of the Dragonreach, politics & history of the Moonsea North)
Gahlaerd Mossmere (NG hm M12)

Vicinity of Waymoot

Endarthar of Wildwoods (CN hm M18)

Wards in Cormyr

Without a doubt some of the nobles, powerful mages, and wealthy merchants of Cormyr have wards. Wards are magical defenses that act only on beings who don't possess a token allowing free passage or who try to pass them in an unapproved manner. The wards put in place



by the rich and powerful citizens of Cormyr have a wide variety of effects, and these wards aren't dealt with here.¹ The Crown of Cormyr, however, employs three standard types of wards throughout the realm—the ring ward, cloak ward, and full ward—and these are detailed here. The spells such wards are based on are akin to the 7th-level wizard spell *wardmist*, detailed in previous guidebooks in this series. The spells, however, are state secrets of Cormyr and so don't appear here.²

It has long been rumored that the Obarskyr family has a private refuge where its greatest treasures are stored that is guarded by something called a dragon ward. The dragon ward suppos-

edly unleashes magic akin to dragon breath attacks, and like dragon breath it can lash out for a great distance down passages, permitting no one to elude the effects. But, as of this writing, such rumors remain unconfirmed.

Ring Ward

The weakest type of ward is known as a ring ward because a *Purple Dragon ring* permits passage through it, as do all the pass tokens listed hereafter for the more powerful wards. If unauthorized beings try to pass this sort of ward, they receive a mild energy shock. This shock is designed to turn aside birds, snakes, cattle, and other unintelligent life, and it

¹Elminster: Consider thyself warned of their existence.

²Elminster: Because we'd all like them to remain state secrets.



does deals 1 point of damage to any character failing a saving throw vs. spell.

Unauthorized contact with the ward triggers an alarm in the form of a light or a sound, as determined when the ward was created. The ward also blocks the passage of all spells of 3rd level or lower, absorbing their energies. Thus, a wizard employing a *fly* spell who penetrates a ward—such as those around the towers of the Palace of the Purple Dragon in Suzail—loses the ability of flight and falls.

Cloak Ward

The middle type of ward is called a cloak ward because a *war wizard cloak* permits passage through it, as do a *commander's ring* and a *passagestone* (but not a *Purple Dragon ring*). Unauthorized contact with a cloak ward has the same effects as disturbing a ring ward. In addition, any intruding creatures must make two additional saving throws, one vs. spell and one vs. paralyzation.

If the saving throws vs. spell fail, intruders are chilled for 6d6 points of damage (similar to the damage of a *wand of frost*, treating all 1s rolled as 2s). If these saving throws succeed, only half damage is inflicted. If the saving throws vs. paralyzation fail, creatures are also stunned for 1d2 rounds, reeling and unable to think or act voluntarily. Note that stunned creatures normally remain in the ward, suffering the 6d6 points of chilling damage again on the rounds in which they are stunned. If the saving throws vs. paralyzation succeed, intruders suffer no stun effects.

Undead intruders must also make these two saving throws. If both fail, they are dis-

rupted (destroyed utterly). If only one fails, undead intruders sustain 5d4 points of damage. If both succeed, these undead pass through the ward with no ill effects.

Full Ward

The strongest type of ward is the full ward. These wards vary in specific powers, but all full wards can be passed through by means of a *commander's ring* or a *passagestone* but not a *Purple Dragon ring* or a *war wizard cloak*.

The effects of violating a full ward combine the harmful and warning effects of both lesser types of wards, plus the invisible full ward has a “soft” outer edge about 3 feet in depth that hardens into a barrier akin to a *wall of force*. This inner portion of the *ward* also acts a *ring of spell turning* on all magic that comes into contact with it.

In some full wards, such as one encircling the royal bedchambers in the palace in Suzail, the solid innermost portion manifests only when one is going in, and it doesn't exist to someone exiting the warded area. In others, such as the ones around all Purple Dragon armories, it is absolute in both directions.

Magical Items of The Crown

Here follow details of some of the magical items made and used by the governing forces of Cormyr. There are apt to be many near-identical specimens of these items in use in the realm at anytime. Possession of one by someone who is not an agent of the Crown is an offense that brings immediate arrest and a very thorough questioning by war wizards employing thought-reading



magic as well as probing questions. Adventurers are advised that the only good bluffs when caught with one of these items are: "I'm a king's messenger," "I'm an agent of the war wizards," or "The king (or Vangerdahast) gave it to me to use on a special mission I'm not allowed to tell you about—but which I'm engaged in right now!" People using these defenses must be ready to flee Cormyr instantly if they try them on anyone above the rank of first sword [sergeant] in the Purple Dragons, a novice war wizard apprentice, or a nonroyal courtier!

Like other entries in this appendix, the selection presented here shouldn't be considered definitive. It includes only items Volo could gain details about, though admittedly he learned far more than the common citizenry of Cormyr ever discern. The *bracers* and *cloak* are employed by war wizards and sometimes by the heads of important noble families. The *Purple Dragon ring*, *rod* and *blade* are used by Purple Dragons—and generally by officers, not common soldiers. The far-rarer *commander's ring* and *passagestone* are only borne by important courtiers, high-ranking military officers, local lords, and members of the royal family. Elminster notes that many stolen items of Crown magic have been found in chests that were shallowly buried, stuffed into hollow trees, or hidden in attics, crypts, warehouses, and inn cellars—and that more turn up every day in Cormyr.

Battlestar Bracers

XP Value: 4,000

GP Value: 8,500

These plain metal wristbands do not augment Armor Class in any way, and they

may be worn and used with or without other armor by all character classes. Both bracers must be worn or neither operates; their power is connected to a magical resonance between them. Wearers of the *bracers* are shielded at all times with protection identical to that provided by the 3rd-level wizard spell *protection from normal missiles*. All fire-based attacks and *magic missiles* striking the wearers are reduced in the amount of damage they inflict by 1 point per die of damage.

In addition, by silent effort of will, every third round the *bracers* can either fire four *magic missiles* or emit one *flaming sphere*. The *magic missiles* function (except in number) similar to the 1st-level wizard spell *magic missile*. They cause 1d4+1 points of damage each and can be used on up to four separate targets. The *flaming sphere* functions similar to the 2nd-level wizard spell of the same name, appears and moves in the direction the *bracer* - wearer points, and cannot be redirected once set in motion.

Baulgroth's Blade

XP Value: 1,500

GP Value: 3,000

These plain long swords, broad swords, or sabers bear a +1 enchantment and are used in training, rough surgery (cutting open an infected body area) or sometimes to scare an individual. Named for the long-dead wizard who invented them, *Baulgroth's blades* are issued to every Purple Dragon barracks and garrison.

Whenever one of these weapons successfully damages living flesh, it can be willed by the wielder to perform a *cure light wounds* upon the being it has struck,



restoring 1d8 points of damage. The blade's damage and healing rolls are made separately; they aren't always the same. When this healing power isn't being used, the only sign that a *Baulgroth's blade* isn't an ordinary weapon is that its point trails a quickly fading line of radiance as it is wielded. The radiance is bright enough to find keyholes, inscriptions, and the like in the dark. Purple Dragons sometimes use this trait of a *Baulgroth's blade* to fool opponents into thinking they face a powerful magical blade.

Commander's Ring

XP Value: 6,000

GP Value: 12,000 (up to 18,000 if sold to enemies of Cormyr in Sembia or Westgate) These hardened gold bands bear the engraved Purple Dragon device of the Obarskyr royal family. They function as *rings of protection* +2 with five additional powers. A *commander's ring* can emit magic equal in all respects to the spells *featherfall*, *knock*, *wall of force*, and *continual light* up to three times (for each ability) per day. It can also trace any *Purple Dragon rings* (see below) within 100 feet of it, giving the wearer of the *commander's ring* a feeling for the distance and direction of each such ring, or it can allow the wearer to choose one such ring and concentrate on its movements, blocking out the indications of others. Most Purple Dragons are aware that their superiors can trace their movements in this way.

One *commander's ring* can't trace another *commander's ring*. If this ring is worn on the same hand as a *Purple Dragon ring*, the two rings function normally, but they only count as one ring for

purposes of how many rings can be worn by the wearer. Thus, the wearer can wear and use a third magical ring at the same time. This is one of the very rare instances in which this can be done.

Purple Dragon Ring

XP Value: 2,500

GP Value: 4,000

These brass rings bear the engraved Purple Dragon device of the Obarskyr royal family. They have two powers, both of which can be used without limit. When worn, a *Purple Dragon ring* can cause *light* lasting for 1 turn. This radiance occurs in a 10-foot sphere around the *ring* or up to 40 feet away from it in the direction the wearer's points, using the hand the *ring* is on. Once created, this *light* lasts a full turn unless dispelled by some other method; the *Purple Dragon ring* cannot disperse it.

A *Purple Dragon ring* can also be used to *detect poison* by speaking its word of activation, which is engraved on the inside of the band (usually "Bonthar"), and immersing it in the substance to be tested. The ring can test liquids, gases, or solids. Solids are tested by making an incision or carving in the substance to put the ring into full contact with it.

The ring glows an eerie golden-green if it encounters anything harmful to humans, demihumans, and humanoids and a bright blue if it comes into contact with something enchanted that may or may not be harmful. This roundabout *detect magic* ability is usually used to make sure that potions sold in Cormyr are the real thing and not merely flavored oils or water.



Purple Dragons have standing orders to test food and drink that they purchase or seize whenever they're outside civilized Cormyr and on all other occasions when they're suspicious of cooks or viands. Poisoners acting for Westgate, the Zhentarim, and other foes of the Crown work tirelessly to bring the Obarskyr line to an end, despite repeated failures. Thus, all food served to any royal family member or officer of the court, including local lords and heralds, not just courtiers in Suzail, is so tested as a matter of course.

These rings are seldom worn by Purple Dragons below the rank of lionar (sergeant of sergeants³) unless they are on a special mission. A few have been given to special friends of the Crown as pass tokens.⁴ Over 4,000 are known to have been made. Some are stored in all three of Cormyr's cities, and they can be issued in a matter of hours when needed.

Peacemaker's Rod

XP Value: 5,000

GP Value: 10,000

This sort of rod is a black metal baton with the Purple Dragon sculpted in brass at both ends. *Peacemaker's rods* are borne by patrol leaders whenever Purple Dragons are sent on patrol and are held in every Purple Dragon armory. Over 2,000 of them are known to exist. Patrols are often sent out bearing them during festival days or times of possible unrest, such as on nights when over a dozen ships have docked at Suzail or Marsember or a similar quantity of caravans have

arrived at once and the crews of all are quenching their thirsts at local taverns.

A *peacemaker's rod* is a +2 weapon, dealing 1d6+1 points of damage per blow when wielded in battle. Whenever it hits, the wielder can elect to have it inflict normal damage or call on an special battle power instead. These special battle powers are usable without limit but can be evoked only once every other round in which the *rod* is successfully used to strike in battle. The three special battle powers are:

- ✧ The rod can deal double damage (rather than normal damage).
- ✧ It can cast *hold monster* as the 5th-level wizard spell, but with only the struck being as the target. The target must make a successful saving throw vs. spell at -3 to avoid the effects.
- ✧ It can *repulse* its struck target (only) for 12 rounds, similar to the 6th-level wizard spell *repulsion*.

A *peacemaker's rod* has one additional power: It can fire a 10-foot-diameter sphere of *light* in a straight line from one of its ends to a distance of 200 feet at MV Fl 24. When the sphere strikes something solid or reaches its maximum distance, it bursts and fades. This does no damage except to undead affected by bright light, but it can be used to give archers light to fire by, to illuminate what lies ahead (down an alley, for instance), or as a locational signal when fired straight up into the sky.

Warriors of other realms find these powers useful, as do animal-tamers and hunters trying to bring back live animals for sale, so there has always been a brisk black market trade in stolen *peacemaker's*

³Similar to the modern 20th-century major.

⁴Mirt the Moneylender, a Lord of Waterdeep, holds one such ring, as revealed on page 230 of the novel *Crown of Fire*, by Ed Greenwood (TSR, Inc., 1994).



rods. Like all other Crown magic described in this appendix, it is not legal to buy, sell, or try to procure or sell a *peacemaker's rod* in Cormyr or its protectorates.

War Wizard Cloak

XP Value: 6,000

GP Value: 12,000

These full-cut black weathercloaks hang to mid-boot on a wearer of average height. They are cut to overlap at the wearer's breast and shield the wearer's arms. They have high collars and separate pull-over hoods. *War wizard cloaks* are distinguished from fine cloaks of other make by the collar embroidery: a Purple Dragon on the left side of the collar and in the center point of the hood (so that it hangs on display to the rear) and an upraised human palm, fingers together, in a circle (picked out in white thread) on the right collar.

A *war wizard cloak* has all the powers of a *ring of warmth*. It also confers *infravision* on the wearer, plus the automatic protections of *feather fall*, *ironguard*,⁵ and *protection from normal missiles* spells. Once per day, the wearer can call on the cloak to power a *sending* (as the 5th-level wizard spell) and a *dimension door* (as the 4th-level wizard spell). *Dimension door* trips of up to 1,200 yards are possible.

Passagestone

XP Value: 4,000

GP Value: 8,000

These enchanted stones are rare, though

every Crown ward in Cormyr has at least four stones linked to it: one held by Azoun, one by Vangerdahast, one stored in a vault, and one or more for the everyday use of those who have lawful business passing the ward. They are different in size and shape for each ward. Most take the shape of small pebbles that can be concealed in the palm of a woman's hand. Those used for castle armories are usually constructed much larger for security reasons, and a very few *passagestones* are even smaller. These last are often gemstones that are worn on rings or other adornments used by members of the royal family or set with several other ward gems on a bootstick slipped down one boot for easy transference and concealment. These bootsticks are often used by Azoun, Vangerdahast, or senior battlemasters [generals] of Cormyr.

Each *passagestone* is engraved with a rune specific to the ward it permits passage through. A *passagestone* has only two additional powers. It can emit *faerie fire* (as the spell) when willed to, allowing users to locate steps or doors in darkness when approaching or negotiating a warded area, and it protects its holder like an *ironguard* spell when willed to.⁶

It should be noted that a *passagestone* could be sold for up to 25,000 if it is offered to enemies of Cormyr, the specific ward the stone is linked to is known, and the ward is important—such as a *passagestone* to an armory, a treasure vault, or a royal apartment in the Palace of the Purple Dragon.

⁵Metal weapons pass through cloak and wearer as if they don't exist, doing no harm. See *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* or *Pages From the Mages* for the *ironguard* spell.

⁶See the previous note.



Appendix IV: Index



lease note that the appendices of this guide-book aren't indexed here. Also, under the Settlements & Territories heading only places mentioned in the text that *don't* have their own distinct entries appear.

Clubs

Bindle's	26
Drowned Sailors Society	44
The Masked Merfolk	44-45
The Osculatory	26
The Society of Stalwart Adventurers	26-27
The Stag Transfixed	27

FestHalls

The Baths	72-73
The Doffed Cloak	184
The Drowning Fish: See the Roaring Griffon.	
Dulbiir's	73-74
The Gargoyle's Perch	168
The High Helm	191, 192-193
The Lavender Lion	74-75
The Low Lantern	143, 150
The Moonlit Touch	75
The Roaring Griffon	52

Fortalices

The Citadel (Arabel)	59
The Citadel (Suzail)	16, 17, 19, 20, 32
Greatgard (Greatgaunt)	209, 210
Greatgates Manor (Greatgaunt)	205, 207
The Haunted Halls (a.k.a. Rivior's Hold; Eveningstar)	144-145
High Towers (Immersea)	154
Hornshield Keep	212

House of Huthduth	206-207
Lord Woodbrand's Keep (Waymoot Keep)	176
Redstone Castle (Immersea)	152, 153, 154
Starwater Keep (Marsember)	35, 41, 45, 50
Thundersword House (Immersea)	154
Tilver's Palace (Tilverton; ruin)	196, 199
Wyvernhunt Keep (ruin)	215

Gambling Houses

The Lucky Dragon	160
------------------------	-----

Inns & Rooming Houses

The Barrelstone Inn	50-51
Beruintar's Bone Warmer	178
Blisterfoot Inn	129-131, 134
The Blushing Maiden	135, 137-138
The Cloven Shield	51
The Cup and Spoon	178
Daliver's Door	96
The Dead Dragon Inn	121
The Dragon's Jaws	30-31
The Drover's Inn	182
The Drowning Flagon	51
The Elfskull Inn	63-64
The Falcon's Rest	64-65
The Firedagger Inn	98, 100, 103
Five Fine Fish	153, 157-158
The Gargoyle's Perch	168
The Golden Plow	128
The Golden Unicorn Inn	144, 151
Grimwald's Revenge	200, 202
Halaband's Inn	158
The High Helm	191, 192-193
The House of Nets	157
Immer Inn	153, 158
Immerhand Inn	116
Jonstyl's Banner	203
Lantern Inn and Boat Rental	105, 116
The Leaning Post	31-32
The Lonesome Tankard	138, 143, 144, 151
Maela's Rooming House	157
The Marching Myrmidon	184
The Moondown Mooring	86
The Murdered Manticore	65
The Nightgate Inn	32
The Nine Fires	65-66
The Old Bucket Drops	211
The Old Man	178-179
The Old Man's Face	173
The Old Oak	51-52
The Old Owlbear	163, 164
Olf's Rest	150
The Pride of Arabel	66-67
The Red Stirge	67
The Roaring Griffon	52
Shaliber's Ship	32
Shassra's	63
The Sheaf of Wheat	183
The Shovel of Sparkling Stones	185
The Silver Scythe	183
The Silver Wink	174, 175, 179
The Six Candles	32-33
The Sixcandles Inn	190
The Slingdyke Arms (ruin)	186
The Snowbound Hound	91
Tethyr's Court	150
The Trailswatch	124
The Utter Inn	82
The Wailing Wheel	33
The Watchful Eye	141
The Water Witch's Rest	188
The Weary Knight	67-68
The Welcoming Hand (ruin)	144
The Whispering Witch	200, 202
The Wild Goose	68-69
The Windlord's Rest	199, 202-203
The World Serpent Inn	69-71
Wyvern Watch Inn	105, 116

Palaces (Royal & Noble)

Arabellan Palace	59, 63
------------------------	--------



Greatgates Manor	
(Greatgaunt)	209, 210
High Towers (Immersea)	154
House Misrim (Arabel)	59
The King's Tower	
(Marsember)	39, 41
Oldstone Hall (Wheloon)	105
The Palace	
of the Purple Dragon	
(Suzail)	20, 21, 22, 31, 51, 169, 213
Redstone Castle	
(Immersea)	152, 153, 154
Thundersword House	
(Immersea)	154
Tilver's Palace	
(Tilverton; ruin)	196, 199

Restaurants

Hot Highsun Handbreads	89-90
The Hungry Man	60-61
The Old Boot	28
The Old Oyster	101-102
The Old Troll's Foot	95-96
The Plate of Eels	190
The Platter of Plenty	45-48
The Puffing Jester	28
The Sleeping Cat	113-114
The Weary Worker	214
The Wight on a Waterdragon	48-49

Schools & Libraries

The Silent Room	
(temple of Deneir)	16-17
Stormhaven House	139

Settlements & Territories

Aloushe	123
Battlerise	77
Black Oaks: See Gray Oaks.	
Blustich	78
Bospir	182
Crownpost (ruin)	129, 130
Dreamer's Rock	78
Eagle Peak	205-206
Esparin	146
Ghars	182-183
Gorthin	78
Gray Oaks	123-124
Griffon Hill	183
Halfhap	183-184
High Horn	206
Hillmarch	184-185
Hilp	124-125

Huthduth	206-207
Kallamarn	79
Marsark's Grove	104
Minroe	125
Moonever	79
Nesmyth	79-80, 124
Northbank	123
Old Axe	207
Ongul's Water	80
Plungepool	125-126
Redspring	14, 54, 182, 185-186
Skull Crag	208
Slingdyke	186-187
Smuggler's Stone	80
Sunset Hill	187
Tethgard (ruin)	194
Yeoman Bridge	188
Zundle (ruin)	126

Shops & Factories

Argyr's Realmsry	86
Aunglar's Mill	164
Alzael's Cleaver	155
The Arrow in Flight	131
Barthemir Needle & Nail Works	88
Baskar's Nook	146-147
Belaeron's Best Bread	24
Bendagar's Barrels	167
The Blackbard	108
The Black Bottle Pottery	131
Borgil's Bold Buckles	131-132
Chasse's Fine Clothing	156
Charn the Smith	172
Cormyrean Coins Coster	108
The Crystal Wyvern	132
Deltar's Mill	147
Dundar's Fine Blades	200
Durn Smithy	183
Ebbard Highsong, Butcher	148
Elhazir's Exotica	60
Erik Longeye, Helms and Hilts	132
Everswords House	139-140
Falconstar	
Wayshipping	108-109
The Fish House	109
The Flame of Love Lutery	160
Galador's Glassworks	94-95
Haerdoun's Helms & Shields	109
Haldos Fine Butchery	109-110
Handiber's Stelk Farm	124-125

Hanno's Herbs and Medicines	110
Hobble's Hooks	79
Hornscars Armory	132
The Iron Hand	148
Jarn's Place	133
Nelzol's Notions	156
The Net of Pearls	43-44
Nightstar Guiding & Outfitters	177
Oglul's Cartworks	172
The Old Boot	148-149
The Old Codpiece	
Arms & Armory	160
Ondrar's Scroll Shop	141
Orsborg's Adornments	149
Rallogar Hardware	110-111
Redbeard Rental Storage and Shipping	111-112
The Ring of Coins	24
Royal Blood Carvers & Carpentry	128
Sendever's Stables	112
The Shield of Glory	210
The Silver Branch	149-150
The Silver Feather	133-134
The Slipper Shop	124
Slowtooth Weaponry	112-113
Spawnhall	189
Syndair's Cloth Fancies	150
Tanalar's Fine Mounts	200
Tavernant's Tellings	24-25
Thaelin's Finework	168
Tower of Wits and Work	199
Tower Shop	120-121
Trindar Shipyards	189-190
Undreir Facilitations	200-201
The Wedding Knight	25
Wendeira's Wondery	100-101
Wheloon Tack & Leather	113
Woumar's Wheloon Mill	113
Wyrmkinder	
Sausage Works	88-89

Shrines

All Faiths: Gladehap Rock	87-88
Chauntea—The Harvest Altar	
(Arabel)	57
Chauntea (Espar)	139
"Darker Sea Cults":	
Marsember	37
Deneir (Arabel)	57
Helm (Arabel)	57
Helm—Sentiel Rock (Espar)	139



Helm—Altar of Shields (Tilverton) .....	.197
Lathander—the Rose Altar (Tilverton) .....	.197
Lliira (Arabel) .....	.57
Lliira (Suzail) .....	.17
Malar (Suzail) .....	.17
Milil (Arabel) .....	.57
Milil (Suzail) .....	.17
Oghma (Suzail) .....	.17
Silvanus—Green Altar (Tilverton) .....	.197
Silvanus—God's Grove (Wheloon) .....	.105
Temporary: Eveningstar Market .....	.142-143
Tempus (Arabel) .....	.57
Tempus—Spear Rock (Wyvern hunt) .....	.215-216
Tymora (Marsember) .....	.36
Tymora—the Hand of Chance (Tilverton) .....	.199
Tyr (Suzail) .....	.17
Umberlee (Marsember) .....	.36
Waukeen (Marsember) .....	.36-37

Taverns

The Baron's Bottle .....	.90-91
The Blue Dragon's Bones .....	.190
The Bold Bard .....	.183
The Cloven Shield .....	.51
The Dancing Dragon .....	.61-63
Evershield's Embers .....	.184
The Flagon Held High .....	.197, 199, 201
The Gargoyle's Perch .....	.168
The Golden Goblin .....	.28
The High Helm .....	.191, 192-193
The Horn and Spur .....	.156-157
Hunting the Knight .....	.102-103
The Laughing Lass .....	.30
The Low Lantern .....	.143, 150
The Maiden Danced at Dawn .....	.86
The Mist Runner .....	.157
The Moon and Stars .....	.177-178
The Nightbleat Tavern .....	.182
The Old Oak .....	.51-52
The Scarlet Sheaf .....	.114
The Silvery Sembian Snail .....	.114-116
The Tankard of Eels .....	.49
Ten Tankards Today .....	.121
The Twelve Dancing Knights .....	.210-211

The Unicorn's Pool .....	.96
The Weary Worker .....	.214
The Wizard's Pit .....	.130, 131, 134

Temples

Helm's Everpresent Shield (ruin) .....	.191
House of Huthduth (Chauntea; monastery) .....	.206-207
The House of the Lady (Selûne) .....	.154-155
The House of the Morning (Lathander) .....	.142, 146
The House of the Seas (Umberlee; ruin) .....	.98
The House of the Wonderbringer (Gond; formerly Gharri's House) .....	.196, 200
The Lady's House (Tymora) (Arabel) .....	.56, 59
The Lady's House (Tyche) (Monksblade; ruin) .....	.98
Moonrise House (Selûne) .....	.210
Morningmist Hall (Lathander) .....	.36, 41
Mother Chauntea's House (ruin) .....	.97-98, 99
The Silent Room (Deneir) .....	.16-17
The Sheltering Hand (Tymora) .....	.176
The Sounds of Joy (Lliira) .....	.176-177
The Towers of Good Fortune (Tymora) .....	.16
The Towers of War (Tempus; ruin) .....	.98

Unique Sites & Sights

Arabel Springs .....	.188
Azoun Triumphant (statue) .....	.153
The Bowshot Run .....	.172
The Caverns of the Claws .....	.146
Chansa's Folly .....	.88
Council Tower .....	.196
The Crystal Grot .....	.10-11
Daerbraun .....	.126
Deepwell Market .....	.215
Eveningstar Gorge .....	.142, 144
Fairy ring .....	.189
The Falling Tower .....	.93-94
Gaesthund's Tomb .....	.153
The Ghost Stag .....	.171
Gnollpost .....	.184

The Grave Hills .....	.184
Graveyard Hill .....	.154
The Haunted Halls .....	.144-145
The High Hunt .....	.137
Immer Bay .....	.152
Knight's Tomb .....	.88
Lake Azoun .....	.22
Lake Thalmiir .....	.126
The Laughing Head .....	.187
The Looking Lady .....	.103
Lost Knights' Dance .....	.99
Lost mine .....	.208
Medusa's Garden .....	.199
Meliyekur's Magical Museum .....	.136
Mistfisher Bay .....	.152
Monument of the Warrior King .....	.59
Moon Dance .....	.209, 210
Mootpost .....	.184
Mount Shalandragar .....	.212, 214
Mushroom Dell .....	.170-171
Oadal's Stand .....	.170
Old Axe .....	.207
Old Blind Mage Mountain .....	.208
The Old Oak .....	.163
Plungepool .....	.125-126
Rathool's Pond .....	.105
Ring of Swords .....	.189
River Sharragh .....	.125, 126
The Royal Court .....	.8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21- 22, 23, 31, 34, 49, 51, 57, 81, 136, 189
The Royal Gardens .....	.13, 18, 20, 22
The Royal Treasury .....	.22-23
Selûne's Stairs .....	.154
Shield Stone .....	.215
Sleeping Rings Cavern .....	.174
The Smoking Mountain See Mount Shalandragar	
Soond Sharr (ruin) .....	.85
Spannhall .....	.189
Spring Hill .....	.154
Stag Skull Bridge .....	.194
Stag Steads .....	.169-171
The Steaming Fountain .....	.209
The Stonecliff .....	.142, 144
The Sunset Stream .....	.185
Vangerdahast's Tower .....	.22
The Vigilant Blade .....	.139
The Women of the Woods136-137
Wormtower118-120
Wyvern Ferry105
Wyvernspur Crypt154



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SPECIAL NOTE: This edition of *Volo's Guide to Cormyr*, intended for travelers from beyond the borders of Faerûn, contains notes, commentary, and substantial revisions by the famous sage and archmage Elminster of Shadowdale.

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